# MEMORIES
## OF AN OLD PRAIRIE RANCHER

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By Thomas N. Wood

1983

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# Acknowledgements

First I must thank our two daughters,
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of writing this narrative.

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this book or she would do it herself. And also
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made sense and for doing some editing.
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together and for typing the manuscript.

And to you Darlene, I personally wish to say,
"Without your help, this book would never have
been written. THANK YOU."

Thos. N. Wood

# Introduction

A few years ago I was ordained and sent to my first charge. I was a city girl raised in Toronto. Where did they send me? Rural Alberta. Even the language was different. Do you know what a nuisance ground is? I didn't. It is a dump.

Tom and Ida Wood were among the first people I met in Irvine Alberta. Thank God for them. They helped indoctrinate me into the ways of the west.

Tom's tales, some tall, some true, helped me understand the attitudes and values of the people with whom I was to work for the next few years.

Tom Wood is a man proud of his Canadian Cowboy heritage. I am sure you will enjoy these tales of his.

Marjory Ashton

Thomas N. Wood the 3rd at the age of two years, three months. In England in those days, boys wore dresses until they were four years old.

On the 16th day of October, 1904 was born to Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Wood of Glossop, Durbyshire, England, a boy, christened Thomas N. Wood, hereinafter referred to as I or me. This narrative is not so much about what happened to me as of what happened around me during my life of over three quarters of a century.

Of necessity it will contain some dry history, but dry history is what I will try to avoid.

Some of this narrative including style and punctuation is written as it would have been if I had written it in my school days. Some is written in a more contemporary style and some in the way I think it should be written.

Anyway, some people like to find mistakes as well as read and there are plenty of those — so, in this literary effort there is something for everyone.

This narrative is written in episodes instead of chapters.

Each episode in my life or that touched me in some way, is true except for the changing of a few names of people and places to avoid identification.

The part that comes after: The truth.
Some of the truth
and, none of the truth,
so help me Anna, is exactly that.

Note: The terms, Old Harry, Old Zwick, etc., aren't in any way meant to be derogatory; they were to identify the senior member of a family having other adults in it, at the time the family moved into an area.

# Preface

We know very little about mother's ancestors except that they lost 1¼ million dollars to the British Chancery because of a break in inheritance lineage (there was a mixup in registrations) and they could not prove their legal right to their inheritance.

Mother was educated to be a school teacher, but she didn't care for that profession.

For years back in history, the girls in mom's family were mostly weavers and the men seemed to be engineers. With dad being an engineer too, maybe that's how I turned out to be one.

Mother and dad were great lovers of books and we (my sister, my brother and myself), have always been surrounded by good books. This probably had a considerable influence on our characters.

My father's knowledge of his ancestors, went back to the late 1340's to the time of the Bubonic Plague (Black Death), when the Shirleys (a brother and sister) and the Reileys (also a brother and sister) disobeyed the quarantine imposed on the entire country and fled into the Sherwood Forest, where they lived off the land until the epidemic was over, then returned to civilization again. Soon after, Shirley married the Reiley girl and Reiley married the Shirley girl. This is the first definite knowledge of my father's ancestry. In later years, his ancestors were farmers and cheese manufacturers. My father was technically trained to be a weaving mill overseer. He was also an engineer.

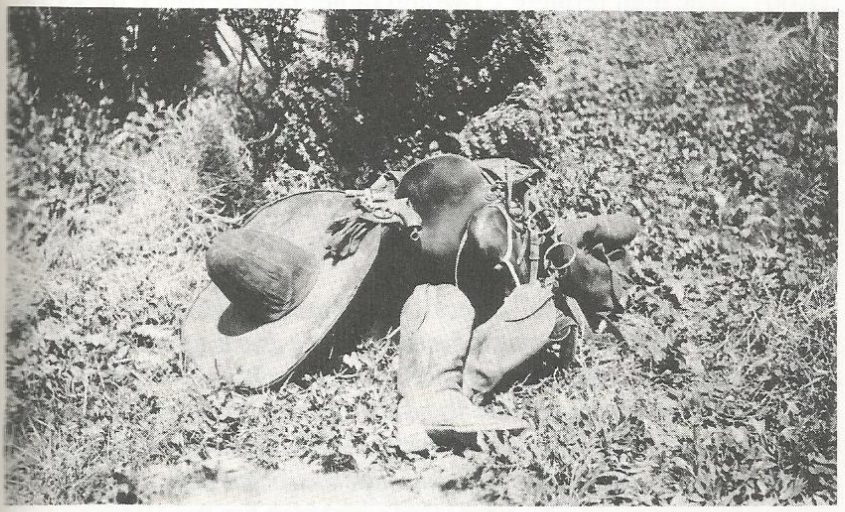
He farmed in England prior to emigrating with his family to Canada, landing in Medicine Hat on March 27th, 1907.

He was engineer at the power-house in Medicine Hat for about four years before moving out to the homestead in 1911 eight miles north-west of Walsh, Alberta, where he farmed and ranched until his passing in June, 1954.

**Before 1904**

## Friends You Don't Forget

Our special friends, the George Webbers, came to Medicine Hat from Sarnia, Ontario, in about 1902 before we came over from England in 1907.



Early 1900's: the last of the shootin' irons were on their way out.

When George Webber entered the old American Hotel looking for lodgings, the first thing he met was a long-horned cow placed in the lobby by some exuberant cowboys. Looking beyond the bar, there were bullet holes in the wall made by oiled up cowboys shooting the necks off bottles. He wondered, "Whatever have I gotten myself into?" But the days of firearms were on the way out. And after running a store in Medicine Hat for some years, they settled on a ranch south of Dunmore, Alberta . . . George and Maggie (his wife), the names were synonymous, lived respectfully the wildest and most colorful lives I've ever known of.

Their lives were far more colorful than mine. I wish I could write their life story.

More about this wonderful couple later.

**Turn of the Century**
**Before 1904**

## Fred Crewe's Introduction to the West

When Fred Crewe, later of Irvine, Alberta, came to Medicine Hat, Alberta in the early days, he landed there broke. Being a complete stranger he hated to ask for a loan. But desperation is the mother of courage so he asked the manager-owner of the Old American Hotel if he could borrow a dollar. To his surprise, the man handed him $5.00. A little later, Fred paid back the $5.00 and asked: "Why did you lend me $5.00 when I asked only for $1.00?" The man replied, "I would rather take a chance on $5.00 to find out if a man is honest, than take a chance on much more to find out that he ain't."

(In later years, the 20's and 30's at Irvine, Alberta, Fred Crewe and his boys, John (Buster) and Albert ran a trucking business and an oil and gas service and garage, plus, with the help of the girls, ran the post office 'til in the 1920's.

But in the early days he worked for Bob Porter — Grandfather of our present Bob Porter.

There were several riders (hired men) discussing the **big** problem of slaughtering and dressing a pig for kitchen supplies. "For a bunch of cowboys it could be a real problem." Fred Crewe being a little fellow with fair sized ideas said: "Any 'dope' with a little know-how could handle it himself." The boss and owner, Bob Porter, was as keen as any to escape the job so he jumped at the chance by saying: "O.K. Fred, that's your job for the afternoon," and to the boys, "Come on, let's get out of here."

Fred goes to inspect the pig he was to handle which had been penned separately from the others. It turned out to be a six hundred pounder, and he was only one hundred and fifteen pounds — "Me handle all that alone!" "Gee! Why did I have to go and open my big mouth?"

Preparing a pig for the kitchen, after causing cessation of life the carcass is dunked into a barrel of hot water to loosen the bristles, then lifted out onto a platform to scrape off the bristles and then hung up and dressed. Now, how could a hundred and fifteen pound man do all that with a six hundred pound pig? This is how he did it: He dug a pit with one end sloping; built a fire; heated stones;

filled the pit with water; rolled the red hot stones into the pit; enticed the pig to the side of the pit with grain; administered the en de coup, and then hooked one end of a block and tackle to the pig. The other end he hooked to a post a few feet away from the sloping end of the pit, then rolled the pig into the hot water. After sufficient scalding he pulled it out onto the platform with the tackle to drain. Scraped off the bristles; set up a tripod; hooked the opposite end of tackle from the pig to it and hauled the pig up into a hanging position and dressed it. He then did the best he could to obliterate the evidence of how he did it; patted himself on the back and waited to lord it over the bunch of cowpokes who had escaped. He expected them to come back intending to razz the living daylights out of him or to find that he had taken to the hills to escape the terrible ribbing that he knew a bunch of punchers could hand out. When they returned, scarcely a thing in the yard had been disturbed, and there hung the pork ready to be cut up and delivered to the kitchen. They accused him of calling in the neighbors to help, but the cook backed him up saying that there had been no one else around. The cook never told, Fred never told what happened and the mystery remained unsolved for many years for all of them, and forever, for those who moved on.

**Turn of the Century**

## Early Amusing Incidents

Just an amusing incident: Dad and my uncle Joe were spending a week on holiday in London (England). They were in the area where pickpockets were the thing of the day. Noticing a young boy with a watch in his hand, assumed he was a pickpocket, so my dad felt for his watch and it was gone. They immediately gave chase; caught the boy and told him that if he would give them the watch they would let him go. This he did willingly. Returning home, dad said to mom: "A pickpocket took my watch while we were in London but we got it back." She said, "You didn't even take it. It's still on the dresser." They put an ad in the paper and also tried in other ways to find out whose watch they had taken away from the pickpocket, but without success. The two watches were almost identical. I still have the "stolen one"; it's on display in the museum.

Another amusing incident which happened about the same time involved two of my uncles (mother's two brothers). They weren't a couple of tough pistol packing wild west cowboys, just a couple of apparently normal guys. Gentle fellows, till things got

out of hand which happened one dark night on a lonely country road as they made their way home so late, that it was early. While passing along the loneliest part of the road, they were confronted by an armed robber — "Held up and robbed" should have read the report, but it didn't turn out quite that way. They never told us what they did to scare him, but they scared that armed robber so badly that he fled, hoping at least to save his own life. Being armed was inadequate protection for a supposedly tough guy that wasn't tough enough.

I also have a revolver, reputed to have belonged to an armed robber, which they found lying on a rock. Whether it was his or not is anybody's guess.

## Our Emigrating

In March 1907, when I was a little boy across the sea, my mother lead me down to the pier and on to a mighty ocean liner (The Virginian) lying at anchor in a harbour (Liverpool) of our motherland beyond the sea. After hours of waiting, there was an almost indiscernible quiver and a deep quiet rumble which told us that the great engines in the hull had started their unrelenting task of driving this ocean liner steadily and almost silently for days and nights through the rolling surf. Slowly the pier moved away, and dear old England was left behind, for some of us, forever, as this mighty greyhound of the waves steamed out of the harbour and headed for the open sea. Slowly the land disappeared from view and we were surrounded by the rolling surf of the great Atlantic. Day turned to dusk and dusk to darkness, but we still steamed on — into the waves — into the night. Hours went by, days, almost a

*R.M.S. VIRGINIAN.*

week as this beautiful palace plowed on through the dark green water that rolled and heaved as far as the eye could see.

There was little a boy could do but play with chance companions and watch the people as they mingled in an easy social way, dancing and parties at night, friendly conversations at dinner, and a social friendly attitude which is never reached anywhere except on board a ship.One night the sister ship of the then great Virginian, the Victorian, steamed by a few miles away on its return trip to the motherland; its brilliant lights flickering over the water as it plowed on towards the rising sun.

Came the cry, "land," and everyone looked to the west, and beyond the tossing Atlantic emerging out of the horizon was "Canada," the land I am now proud to call my home. It seemed for hours we steamed through the blue towards the welcome land before this mighty giant carrying her precious human load came to rest at her pier as gently as though mysterious hidden hands had placed her there.

Then came the hustle and bustle of unloading. We then walked down the gangway onto the pier, along the pier until our feet sank into the soft soil — "Canada." Later we boarded a Canadian train and for days and nights we roared into the beckoning west, always towards the setting sun. Then this steel giant came to rest in Medicine Hat, Alberta before rolling on to Calgary and Vancouver . . . In and near Medicine Hat I've made my home. Many times I've wandered, but I always come back to this remaining bit of the west. . .

**1907**

## Our First Friends in This New Land

We arrived in Medicine Hat from England on March 27, 1907 and within the hour we had acquired a house. It wasn't a grand mansion but at least we could get out of the weather. It was an old Canadian Pacific Railroad box car with several additions built onto it. It was the property of a Rev. Mulligan, and the rent was, if I remember right, ten dollars per month. Also a representative from the city had called and asked dad if he would work for the city, and of course he accepted, so he had a job. A dray, occupied by a man and a woman drove up to the house, and in the dray was a brand new heater, a cookstove and a few other housekeeping essentials which they unloaded at our door saying, "you'll be needing these, so we thought we'd bring them over." Mom and dad said, "we can't buy them from you as we have used up all of our money

getting here." Their answer, "we're not asking you to pay now, that can come later — let's get these things set up so you can start living —" and got with it. The folks asked, "How can you know whether or not we'll pay since you have never before seen us, and don't know if we can be trusted?" Their reply, "We don't need to worry, we're not afraid of you not paying." We paid later very willingly. They owned a hardware store in Medicine Hat and needless to say, they received most of our hardware trade thereafter. Later they moved to their ranch southeast of Dunmore, Alberta, and we still did business with them in livestock, etc.

These two people were the first people in this new land that we met as friends, and they and our families have remained close friends ever since.

There is more about this wonderful couple elsewhere in this narrative. They were Mr. and Mrs. George Webber, our first friends in this new land. "George and Maggie" — the names were synonymous — when you found one you knew the other was not far away.

Now the older members of our families have passed on and lie resting in Hillside Cemetery, Medicine Hat, Alberta. But the younger members are still a part of that rewarding friendship that was so spontaneous in the long ago.

**1907**

## The Argument Dad Lost to the Chief

In those days, the Indians sold handicrafts on the station platform whenever the passenger train was in. The old Chief, a friend of dad's, wanted to give dad a set of buffalo horns made into a hat rack. Dad being a proud man and the chief a proud Indian, they got into quite a disagreement as to paying. Dad said, "I won't accept anything without paying for it." The chief said, "You have been very good to me and my squaw, please accept it?" So dad did. I still have the set of horns. They are part of our museum displays.

**1908**

## Good Steel, handle and all

When Medicine Hat was a small community of three thousand white people and two thousand five hundred Indians, honesty was normally the thing of the day.

The men who were putting in utilities, etc. didn't even put their tools in their tool boxes, not even on Saturday nights (we had a six day work week then) but just left them wherever they

happened to be used the last time before quitting for the day. The Indians and the white people moved around and mixed freely and no one ever thought of taking something which didn't belong to him. There was the odd exception of course, like when a white man admiring an Indian's axe asked to examine it. The Indian handed it to him, and as he ran his thumb over the almost razor-like edge, he said, "Good steel." The Indian replied, "Yes, handle and all."

**1907**

## The Spring and Summer of 1907

The 1906-1907 winter was a terrible one — many ranchers were all but wiped out. My dad helped to build the Finley Bridge that year, and he said, "that in the spring, there were visible at all times no less than six head of dead stock floating down the river." The ranchers had hauled the dead animals out onto the ice so that they would float down the river in the spring.

All the dead carcasses rotting in the river were by some, blamed for the typhoid epidemic, which took many lives. Some thought it was directly through the water, others thought it was through the milk, but the actual source of the typhoid was never really established.

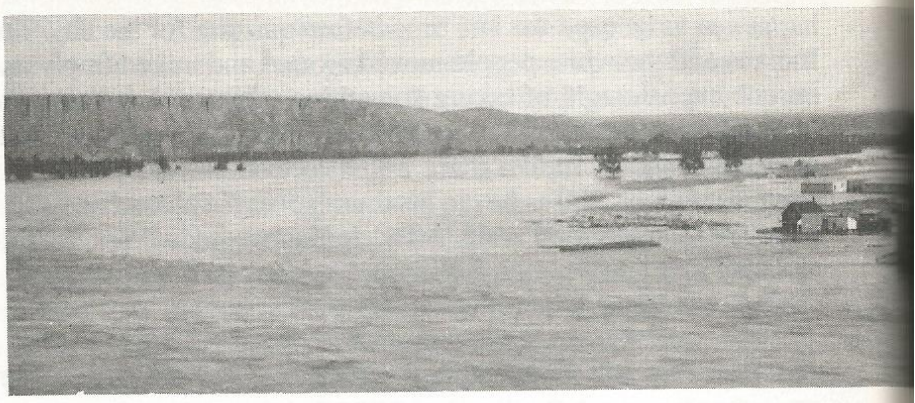
**1908**

## The BIG Flood

In the spring of 1908 the year of the big flood, Captain Ross of the "City of Medicine Hat" (the steamer that plied the South Saskatchewan River in the early days) and Fred McLaughlin, later of Irvine, Alberta, travelled by row boat all through the 'Flats" of Medicine Hat (the low lying area) and tied up at the foot of the hill near Seven Persons Creek . . .

On Saturday nights, the boat, "City of Medicine Hat" and its barge made a trip up the river to Redcliff, taking one and three-quarter hours to go up and 20 minutes to come back, giving an idea of the swiftness of the river.

The young folks danced on the barge, and then climbed the red cliffs near Redcliff. The old folks went along for the ride. My dad was one of the orchestra that played for dancing, so we, the family, went along. Many and varied were the interesting experiences I had in those early days.



Flood, Medicine Hat, Alberta, spring 1908.

**1908**

## My Wild Indian Story

When I was a little fellow 3 or 4 years old, I had snow white hair. It was quite an oddity to the Indian squaws. Anyway, they would stare at me and I would take off at full speed, scared to death, with one or more of them in close pursuit. I'll never forget those horrifying dashes through the streets and lanes of Medicine Hat. I was sure they were out to get me, for what, I didn't know and didn't stick around to find out. It wasn't till many years later I realized that they chased me just for the fun of it as no four year old boy could possibly get away from a grown young lady.

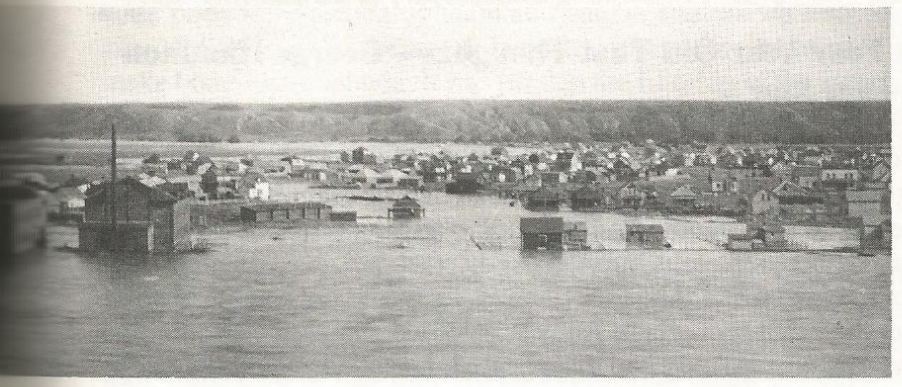
Later I was telling our two young daughters, four, and five and a half, about the incident. One girl asked, "Did they really chase you daddy?" And I made the exaggerated statement, "They sure did, and with my hair standing up like this (brushing my hair up) and my tail hanging straight out like that (and I motioned how) I took off for other parts."

A couple of months later, the older girl asked, "Daddy, how did you lose your tail?" and the younger girl stood up to her full four years of height as if to say, anyone should know that, and said, "Why the Indians jerked it off." Ida, my better half, said, "After that, you'd better be careful about the wild tales you tell."

**1909**

## Russels Ford vs. Our Prince

In 1909 or 1910, Russels bought their new Ford: It was really something to see or to ride in a car in those days. We had our old faithful Prince, who every Sunday morning would stand between the buggy shafts ready to take off for the day, and our hound, Jack,



lying under the buggy, ready for the day's run and to act as security guard. But old Prince, going away from home, somehow was kind of stuck in neutral or at least low gear. But after a days visit and good-byes were said, we were off; mom and dad sitting on the seat and me on a box at the front, just behind the dash board holding the reins — useless as all get out — but the big shot for the day. And "Old Bones" as we affectionately called him giving it all he had as we tore down the road to home.

I can't remember just what happened, but the time came when he went over the Great Divide. But I'll always remember him as he was my first very own horse.

Many horses have gone under my saddle since then — every one with its merits and, may I say, personality — always to be cherished in memory forever.

**About 1909**

## The Cotterill's Grave Yard

Mr. Cotterill's trade was making tombstones, and had a stock of quite a few. To advertise his business he set out in his front yard a small facsimile of a grave yard (now Cemetery) of sixteen small graves; the tombstones standing row on row.

One day while Mrs. Cotterill was looking over the display, an Indian lady (Indian squaw) came by. Seeing Mrs. Cotterill looking at the little graves asked, "Have you **any** children?" Her answer, "NO." Then the Indian lady came into the yard and putting her hand on Mrs. Cotterill's shoulder, said with great compassion, "I'm sorry." Thinking that Mrs. Cotterill had had sixteen children and had lost them all, and had buried them in the little cemetery in their front yard.

**1909**

## A Four Year Old That Thought — George Hamilton — age four

About this time, Medicine Hat, Alberta, was installing additional utilities. Andy Jackson, foreman, was working on a gas line at the bottom of a deep sandy ditch. George Hamilton, then four years old was standing on the bank watching him when the ditch caved in completely burying Andy. George, even though only four, realized that if he looked away, he would not be able to point out the exact spot where Andy was buried. So with eyes glued to the spot where Andy had disappeared, he called and motioned for help. There were several men near as they had just quit for dinner. When they came running, George, pointing to the spot which his eyes had never left said, "Andy's right there." They dug carefully for a few moments and out came Andy's head. In less than three minutes they had dug him completely out and in no time at all, thanks to the quick thinking and good judgment of a four year old boy, Andy lived on. I believe into his twilight years.

**About 1909**

## Bigger Shovels Coming Up

Then there was the time a crew of men were filling the old gravel dump wagons with gravel, using ordinary shovels. Anyone who has shoveled gravel knows that these are plenty big enough. But the contractor for whom they worked, felt that the work wasn't progressing fast enough, so, one bright Monday morning he replaced their ordinary shovels with big coal shovels (or scoops), estimating that since they were four times as big, it would speed up the work four hundred percent — result — all the men quit.

**Early 1900's**

## Bones Bones and More Bones

When we moved out onto the homestead at the beginning of this century, bleached buffalo bones, the aftermath of the slaughter of the buffalo for their hides, plus some horse and cattle bones, etc., were strewn all over the prairie. The Indians and Metis (mostly Metis), and later some early settlers, but not to the same extent, gathered the bones into huge piles to be sold later. The vast piles of bones dotting the countryside were quite a sight, similar to the great piles of beets at the beet stations today. How the gatherers knew which pile belonged to whom, I don't know, but they did, and when an order for bones came from the sugar companies, the

huge piles were hauled by team and wagon and loaded into box-cars and shipped to the sugar factories where they were used to make bone-charcoal which was used in the filtering of the syrup in the process of the manufacturing of sugar. Modern technology has now devised other ways of doing the job.

**1910**

## Were They Being Overly Cautious?

When new settlers came to this country from Europe and other areas of the world, around the turn of the century, they found things, ways and the environment in Canada so different to what they were used to that they weren't sure what could or could not happen in this new land, and their decisions in some instances were sometimes outlandish and, carried out without too much forethought.

The following is a typical example: A newcomer to our area was awakened one dark night by a terrible ruckus in the chicken coop. On investigating, he was met by a pair of eyes glowing in the dark, where upon, not knowing if it was a wolf, a werewolf or a wolverine, he promptly took care of the situation with his trusty old shot gun by blasting whatever it was, right between those eyes. In the morning, they found the neighbor's cow in a heap in the middle of the chicken coop; she had accidently walked out unto the roof of the building which was built in the side of a hill, and had fallen through.

The cow being off its own range and there being a considerable amount of damage done to the roof, the two neighbors called it "even steven," and remained the best of friends and neighbors for the rest of their lives.

**Nov. 11, 1911**

## Our 1911 — Winter Trip to Medicine Hat

Our trip to and stay in Medicine Hat during the winter of 1911-1912: It was Nov. 11, 1911, a lovely bright November day. The only thing wrong with it, it was 33 degrees below. And our little shack on the prairie was no place to spend the winter. Winter had suddenly closed in with snow and cold and was stormy. So when the sun came out we had little choice but to go, and it was a two day ordeal. We didn't have a sleigh at that time, so had to use a wagon. (Not the best conveyance under the circumstances.) We got stuck in a spring, on hillsides and in gullies as we made our way across the open prairie through the tractless snow. We made it to a friend's

place (Charlie Banks) the first day and stayed over night. The next day we easily made it into Medicine Hat.

Dad had rented a partly furnished house for us for the winter. Along with other essentials, in it was a big old fashioned heater. In a few minutes we were warm and cozy and everything just right, 'til I accidently stepped on my brother's partly thawed out big toe. It had thawed out to a depth of about one eighth of an inch while he stood in stocking feet, (socks now) when I stepped on it, peeling that eighth of an inch right off like an egg shell. When we removed his sock, the outside of his toe came with it — what a horrible looking "tootsie." We got it fixed up and in fair shape when a terrifying scream rent the air. My brother standing with his back to the red hot heater, either bent over or backed into it. The next moment he was all but plastered onto the nearest wall, a four by five inch rectangle burned out of his pants. There wasn't much real damage done and the burn wasn't deep, but the hide took on a permanent wave and was fried to a crisp. Poor guy, he could then, neither sit nor walk comfortably for a long time. Later he got a paper route and hobbled along one side of the street and I helped by delivering papers on the other side. I guess that was my punishment for stepping on his big toe. The other deal was his fault.

That winter we kids were sleigh-riding down the hill and along the streets towards Columbia Ave. (Now 7th Ave. S.E.) Anyway, one day a boy went too far up the hill to start, and by the time he got to Columbia Ave. he was still going too fast to do anything about it and shot under a delivery horse between its front and its hind legs as it was pulling the bakery wagon up Columbia Ave. past the intersection. That put the kybosh on the whole Kaboodle. The city said, "That's enough." And warned us never to cross 7th Ave. again. So we had to tone it down a bit so we could stop before reaching the Ave. Ah heck! It took half the fun out of it, but I suppose it was for our own good and safety.

**Spring 1912**

## Just Mary

When I was a little fellow seven years old, we moved back to Medicine Hat, Alberta and lived beside Bob Porter Sr. (Our present Bob Porter's grandfather. They had a daughter; a little six year old girl by the name of Mary. Over the months we became the closest of pals. We were inseparable. And although together we played with the rest of the kids on our block and up and down our street, mostly we played together, just the two of us. Early in the

morning I would join her in her yard or she in mine, depending on who had breakfast first. Those were happy days; we played our little games and had our little secrets. Life was good and we enjoyed it to the fullest. In winter we skated together, and when sleighriding, one sleigh was always big enough for the two of us. When nice, we wandered over the nearby hills. Sometimes throwing stones, sometimes just being together. I walked through the pools of water with my ordinary leather shoes on and bragged that they were water tight and that my feet were dry. But when I went home, mom gave me heck for getting my feet wet. "So that's what was the matter with them, was it?" Oh well, it was worth it all. I'd been a big shot in the admiring eyes of the lovely little girl who adored this big lug. But our happiest times were when we were huddled together in our secret hide-outs away from this awful world, or sitting quietly on a sunny hillside talking about what we were going to be when we grew up, and what we were going to do. There were some pretty big plans afoot in those days.

Then one morning she didn't come out to join me for the day. I waited and waited, but she didn't come, and it seems that I must have gone to the door and asked if Mary could come out and play and I was told that she couldn't for a few days, as she wasn't feeling well. So the days went slowly by and I remember looking up at her bedroom window and wondering how she was. I remember playing listlessly in the yard below; making meaningless marks in the warm soft earth. Maybe I was feeling sorry for myself, but I'm quite sure a lot of my sadness was my genuine concern for my little friend. More days went by. Then one day I noticed that all the window blinds in her house were pulled down. And then someone came and told me that Mary had scarlet fever and that my little friend was dying and that I'd never see her again. No, she couldn't come out to play, "never." I was overwhelmed with a strange loneliness, and I well remember my sight taking in each brick of that side of the house as I slowly raised my eyes to her darkened window, and there for me, life stopped.

I went home to mom — she understood, and she comforted me. That's what mothers are for — God bless them too.

**1912**

## Maud the Mule

In the first years when we moved out onto the farm we had a close neighbor. A Mr. Lawber who had a wife, six children and a mule. "And her name was Maud," but that's not the only reason

for which she is well remembered. (There were many.) One in particular. One morning Maud was readied for a drive and hitched to the single buggy. Their eldest daughter Rosie and my sister Ethel, both girls about fifteen years of age, got into the buggy and drove off to Walsh, Alberta about seven miles away. Everything went just fine till they started home late in the afternoon. By this time, Maud had decided she wasn't going to help with the locomotion of the buggy, leave alone the girls. And the only way the girls could make any headway was to push the buggy by hand so that there was no pressure on Maud's shoulders. So it was, push and stop, push and stop, 'til way after dark. By this time the mosquitoes were out in droves looking for their evening snack, and the girls being dressed in short sleeved organdy dresses were made to order. Evening drifted into night and no girls or Maud. So Mr. Lawber went looking for them. He found them with their push and stop routine about a mile from home, all chewed up and petered out.

They, not knowing what else to do, had pushed the buggy for six miles (maybe the mule a little too). Mr. Lawber right away noticed that the collar pad was missing. It had apparently slipped out in town. So he substituted his sweater for the pad. The three of them then got into the buggy and jogged along home.

**1912**

## Old Bones and the Cut Cincha (Prince was his given name)

Old Bones, as he was affectionately called, mentioned elsewhere in this narrative was not only one of our cherished possessions, but at that time, one of our few possessions. One morning he lay down with his saddle on for a morning siesta. So after being told, by those in the know that if a horse lay down with the saddle on and the cincha pulled tight, it not only couldn't get up, but would die within a few minutes. And when we tried to get Old Bones up he "couldn't" get up. (Actually the lazy so and so wouldn't.) So it's understandable why we were pretty excited.

In those days it was my sister who had the philosophy of, "It's better to do it and not need to, than need to and not do it." So without hesitation she grabbed the butcher knife and cut the cincha in two. Green Horns as we were, didn't think of loosening the latigo to accomplish the same thing. And anyway, we didn't need to cut or loosen anything. A good swift kick in the appropriate place would have done the trick.

Early 1900's

## The Self-Sufficiency of Our Early Settlers

The rugged self-reliant individuals who first settled our vast prairie region in the early days were men and women apart. When something had to be done, they went ahead and did it.

This brings to mind Mr. Rorman (Sr.), who lived alone just north of section one south of Walsh. During those years he fell victim to appendicitis. Too ill to travel the distance to his nearest neighbor to get help, and no other form of communication being available, he realized that the only way out of his predicament was an immediate operation (an appendectomy), so he set about to do the job.

Within reach of his bed he gathered together the essentials for a ten day confinement. Then sterilizing his old straight razor for use as a scalpel, and also a needle to do the sewing job that was coming up, plus some white silk thread. Then attending to other necessary details he climbed into bed and got with it.

After a few days, his neighbors realized they hadn't seen him lately, so thought they had better investigate. They found him in bed well on his way to recovery, but just to be on the safe side they sent for the doctor. He came — looked Mr. Rorman (Sr.) over thoroughly and congratulated him on a job well done — his comment — I couldn't have done it better myself.

Dr. Dixon, our family doctor, told me that it was a doctor friend of his who had examined Mr. Rorman and said that Mr. Rorman had done a remarkable job. Of course we had heard as much from our friends who could have added a bit here and there, but we certainly aren't going to doubt the word of the doctor who examined him.

Early 1900's

## No Dams — No Wells Melted Snow

During the opening up of the south eastern area of Alberta, there were as yet no dams, few wells and no well boring machines. So the job of digging wells must needs at that time be done by hand. This, like hauling grain from the threshing machine was a case for a strong back and a really weak mind. (I don't really mean that) but in these cases your mind wasn't needed very much. There was the odd well in the area from which people hauled their water in the summertime. But that wasn't practical in the winter due to freezing. And underground water was very hard to find. Many

wells dug to as deep as one hundred feet turned out to be dry. So until a water producing well was dug, it was melt snow in the wintertime in a washtub or boiler for the few stock owned by the average homesteader. As time went on, more good wells were produced by digging by hand, or bored by one of the very few well boring machines that came into the district.

About this time, many dams were built. Some quite large which held a supply of water the year around. And the small ones at least saved hauling water in summer. For drinking water, a shallow well was often dug behind a dam depending on seepage from the dam. Now, big dams and dugouts supply water for stock and some irrigation; there are also many deep wells. There were some springs along the creek beds and in a few coulees. Many times this was the main reason for taking a certain location for a homestead.

**Closest water five miles in any direction**

At this time I'll relate a story that was all the go on the dry prairie during the years while the settlers were establishing themselves.

It seems a man from Ontario drove into a farmer's yard just as the farmer was entering with a tank of water drawn by a four horse team, (the water tanks in those days were made from wooden planks and looked like half of a huge straight sided barrel, laid on its side on a wagon running gear). On inquiry about the hauling of the water, the farmer said, "My neighbor five miles down the road is lucky, he has a good spring on his place; many of us haul from it." The Ontario man said, "Why don't you dig down right here and have water right in your own yard?" The farmer's reply, "It's probably closer to water over to my neighbors."

**1905 to 1911 through 1915**

## Coulthard "The Man"

Tom Coulthard was a well known character in our area during the time this part of the west was opening up.

He had a generous supply of good points, but like the rest of us, had a few bad ones, but was instrumental in getting our area started.

His relatives seemed to be split up between the Dakotas and Ontario; and he brought with him to the west some of each culture. (The family were lawyers, doctors, governors and senators, etc.)

He had a weakness for Kentucky thoroughbreds: To we cattlemen, the way he built his fences was really something. The

top wire was close to five feet from the ground and the bottom wire close to three and one half feet from the ground; a small cow could easily walk under them. The idea was to keep his fool race horses from jumping out, and in this country at that time, a race horse was about as useful as a hole in the head.

He had, as his constant companions a highfallootin' stallion and a nondescript dog. And it seemed that he was always behind your table, his horse at your manger, and his dog at your door, all ready for a hand out, but their help more than paid for the handout.

He kept track of all the horses in the country. If one of yours was missing, he would for a price, tell you where it was. We sometimes felt that our horses were helped in their disappearing act; like getting shut up in a barn 'til the area had been searched. Or like getting themselves caught in an out of the way field. Invariably, Coulthard would produce such animals in consideration of a five dollar bill. So there was some suspicion as to how it all happened — by some that is.

Now let's get to the good points: First, he was otherwise honest; he wouldn't steal a crust of bread. And if anyone was in trouble, he would be the first there to help. He would lend you anything he had, including his cherished saddle horse. He would help you with anything, but as soon as business was involved, there was only one way — his way. But with his honesty no one ever really got hurt. And when some of your neighbors weren't treating you right, like when Gus Frostt swiped the water out of our only well at four o'clock in the morning. (There were just mom and we kids on the farm; dad was away working for the summer.) So mom asked Mr. Coulthard what she could do about it. He said, "Nothing, I'll attend to it." So at four o'clock next morning as Frostt drew the first pail of water, Coulthard tapped him on the shoulder and explained to him his falling by the wayside, and if he didn't improve his ways, that's not the only place that he would be falling. And that took care of that. And although he was short of water himself, it never occurred to him to take anyone else's.

He seemed to have a way with people. If there was trouble between neighbours, a few well chosen words to each party and the feud was over. So he went about the neighbourhood making people mad at him, but at peace with each other.

I believe it was in the fall of 1915 that Tom Coulthard moved away to live with his brother George at Bowell.

I never heard of him afterwards, but I have never forgotten

him, not only because of what he did for us, but also for what he did for others.

Here's something that came to light long after he had passed on to his reward. Because he fancied himself a "water witcher," we felt that he wasn't quite right "upstairs." He wasn't overly successful in his water well locating, but I well remember when he was trying to locate water for us, his divining rod (in this case, a willow fork or crotch) went into a series of fantastic jerks. He apparently had to hang on to it for dear life. We took it as a display of good acting, and promptly forgot all about it and took little interest in his exclamation, "Gas! All kinds of it!" And we now finally realize that at that moment, he was standing right on top of one of the largest natural gas fields in the world.

**1912**

## More about Old Bones (Prince, My Saddle Horse)

One, he used to pull; after being securely picketed before we went to bed, the next morning he would be standing on a nearby hill watching the sunrise — him, picket, picket chain and all. Him still being in the neighbourhood didn't mean we had a saddle horse. Not by any means. There was still that little matter of catching the scoundrel. He would traipse all over the countryside with the end of the picket chain and pin just out of our reach until it caught between a couple of stones. That caught our horse, but didn't solve the mystery of how he pulled the pin. We finally caught him at it. He walked around and around the picket peg until there was only a few feet of loose chain left. Then by lowering his head and swinging it in a circle over the peg, and then pulling up, he found that sooner or later the chain would catch and up came the picket-peg. We beat that one by fastening the chain to the top of the peg and then driving it down just below the level of the ground. That way there was no peg to wrap the chain around.

Others must have had similar problems because later, someone invented a picket peg or pin that looked like a corkscrew and screwed into the ground — that peg stayed put.

**1912**

## Dollie and Her Colt

Dad was away working and mom and we kids were alone on the homestead. We had three horses. One was an Indian pony named Dollie. She had a little colt; a cute little duffer. Then one

cold night tragedy struck, three times during the night Dollie came to mother's bedroom window and whinnied. She was calling for help, but mom, not wise to the ways of animals at that time, ignored her pleading. Next morning we found the little fellow dead from exhaustion and exposure; he had fallen on a patch of ice and couldn't get up.

Dollie was a friendly little horse, and her attitude towards we kids didn't change, but she never forgave mom for letting her little baby die. Ever afterwards, when mother tried to pet her, she would turn her head away in total rejection.

**1913**

## I Thought I Could ride

I could ride almost as soon as I could walk. And by the spring of 1913 I thought I had it made, but was soon deluded of that idea. One day while showing off, I went galloping past the house at full tilt on my way to the barn. Dollie, my saddle pony, was noted for her quick turns and sudden stops. My sister Ethel saw me coming, and just as I was passing the kitchen door she stepped out and holding the broom out in front of her, shouted — "Whoa!" Dollie stopped right now and I continued on to the barn all by myself. Right then and there, I revised my opinion of my riding ability, and pegged it a considerable distance down the scale. But I made out I wouldn't have become airborne if I hadn't been riding without a saddle.

**Early 1900's**

## Bullets Any Length

My brother Horace had no fear and at times, little or no judgement. I well remember the old 45 revolver we had. It wasn't a big gun, but packed a terrific wallop. For some reason, we couldn't get the right 45 caliber shells to fit it. But could get what I believe were 44's. They weren't just right, but would fit, except for being too long. So my brother simply pounded the lead down farther into the shell casing until the shells were short enough to revolve with the chamber and we were ready for practice.

It's funny that that guy ever grew up — but he did — but it wasn't his fault.

**Early 1900's**

## Jim and Jerry

Back in the early 1900's, Barney Crocket, then a young man, was hauling a heavy load of agricultural commodities with a six

horse team strung out freighter style when he became stuck in the Walsh Creek (McKay Creek) near the Sisson Ranch six or seven miles north of Walsh, Alberta, presumably on his way to Hargrave's ranch. Mr. Stockman (not his real name) who was manager of the Sisson Ranch at that time came out to see what the problem was. He found that Barney's team was a bit disorganized and was getting exactly nowhere. So he said, "I'll go get Jim and Jerry (assumed names) and pull your load out of that mudhole." In a little while he returned bringing Jim and Jerry, two overgrown sleepy-eyed oxen. Barney said, "hook on in front and we'll see what we can do." Mr. Stockman replied, "I said I'd pull out your loaded wagon, not your horses, so unhook and get them out of the way." Barney thought the man must be crazy — two lowly cattle beasts do what six horses had failed to do. But anyway, he unhooked his six horse team and Mr. Stockman hooked on to the wagon with his two escapees from a bologna factory; said, "O.K. boys; take her out," and turning to Barney, informed him that since those two wouldn't let up till the wagon was pulled out of the creek or the creek was pushed from under the wagon, he might as well put his six horses in the barn and feed them and come on in for dinner, as it might take awhile for Jim and Jerry to separate that wagon from that mudhole.

After a leisurely hour or so, Mr. Stockman said, "Let's go see how Jim and Jerry are doing." On arriving at the scene they found Jim and Jerry plus the loaded vehicle standing high and dry on the far side of the creek. The sleepy-eyed pair stood quietly chewing their cuds as though well pleased with themselves and were quite ready to take on another challenge.

Mr. Stockman explained to Barney that he shouldn't feel badly about the incident as many others had gotten hung up in that same spot. In fact, it was for just such emergencies that he kept old Jim and Jerry around.

"And now," he said, "a bit about the philosophy of those two numskulls; they're as powerful as two small elephants and as stubborn as a bay steer. Their theory is: if you apply enough steady pressure for long enough, something just has to give. So, since they never let up, whatever is in front of what they are pulling eventually moves out of the way and the object inches slowly forward until it is free. Yes sir! Give those two time, and they'll move practically anything that isn't bolted down."

1914

## George Hamilton and The Churn

Our good neighbor, Harry Hamilton, had a son George, a homestead, a bicycle and a job in Medicine Hat twenty-six miles away. He rode home to be with his son for the weekends, but the rest of the time, George boarded with a neighbor family. And that family had a churn (butter churn); a barrel mounted on bearings that whirls around when pedaled or cranked, and at great speed if pedaled or cranked fast enough. There is a wooden plug to release the pressure when it builds up in the churn (the pressure buildup is caused by the churning process) and if the pressure isn't released occasionally the results can be disastrous. One of the boys of the family saw the churn standing there all ready to go, and couldn't resist the temptation of giving it a whirl, but the whirl was too good and too long. The pressure built up, the plug blew out, and cream splattered all over the walls, floor and ceiling as it poured out through the hole as the churn revolved at high speed, not only losing the cream but making an awful mess (and I mean **mess**). The boy blamed it on George, and intent on seeing that justice was immediately and in correct proportion meted out, the boy's mother took after George. George only ten years old, feared for his life, and took off across the prairie for his own home at top speed, never to return, and became the youngest bachelor I have ever known. A ten year old bachelor normally has lots of time on his hands and he spent it mimicking the animals and birds of the surrounding prairie. His imitations were so real that coyotes and other wildlife would come within a few feet of him when he called them.

1914

## Early Settlers and Their Dugouts

When my brother Horace and I were kids, we were riding across the open prairie when a man suddenly popped out of the side of a hill. On looking closer, there was also a mound of new earth. When the area was being opened up for settlement, lone men would pay ten dollars to file on a quarter section of land; would go out onto it; find a hill with a short steep rise and dig out and build a shelter called a dugout.

They would live in these improvised dwellings until they were able to build a shack, and at the same time, doing some of their proving up duties which, partly consisted of living so many months each year on the place for three years. They were also required to break up at least fifteen acres of sod.

Often, loneliness, would get the better of them, and they

would pick up of their possessions whatever they could carry and walk off the place, never to return.

But for others — many were the dreams of a bright future of many of these young men as they sat atop their earthy dwellings and watched the glorious sunsets fade into night, and peace. Many of these humble starts, encouraged by the memory of a beautiful girl back home waiting to join them when circumstances would permit, grew into fine farms and ranches. And today, the grandchildren of those dreams of long ago, live full and happy lives not far from a depression in the ground that still marks the place where grandpa sat alone and watched the sun go down.

**1914**

## About Lilly and the Half Barrel of Spuds

We being complete "green horns" not long out from the Old Country, were prime targets for the incredible yarns told to us by those in the know. We often laugh now when we think back and realize how gullible we were. But since then have told a few ourselves.

Anyway, all of us got pretty excited when anything went wrong. Usually the mishaps were minor things, but after being told of the dire results that would follow these mishaps, it's no wonder we got excited. But my sister Ethel, was the worst of all of us. She got her tail in a knot oftener than anyone I can think of. But in later years, because of her concern over every little thing, we were able to remedy most things before they happened, or meet them head on before they got away on us. But it wasn't always thus.

One nice spring day, we, for some reason had an old wooden barrel half full of potatoes standing in the yard, also round about was one of our prize young cows. Cow and spuds got together inside of the barrel. The cow having big horns was having difficulty extracting her head. In the tussle, she fell down upsetting the barrel and was unable to get up because of the heavy weight stuck on her head. Her head being buried in spuds added an ominous sizzle to her moaning, her moaning being caused by the awkward position she was in to be that full of spuds. Ethel hearing the commotion ran out to investigate. Seeing the cow stuck in the barrel with her feet sticking up in the air because of her awkward position, decided Old Lilly was on her "last legs" and forthwith grabbed an axe and chopped the hoops off the barrel. That barrel

exploded, spilling itself and the spuds all over the yard, but freeing the cow.

It must have been a very old hand-made barrel because all the staves were the same length but no two were alike otherwise, neither in width or curve. Each stave must have been hand fitted next to its neighbor. Dad and I got four new hoops and when we had nothing better to do, we worked on putting that barrel back together again. We never made it. (It must have had a million combinations.) After thirty years we gave up and used it for firewood.

**1914**

## One Episode Brought On by the Drought of 1914

In 1914, the year of the big drought, feed was very scarce out on the prairie. So that year, dad and my brother Horace cut and hauled hay from the Cypress Hills (30 miles away to the south) to the farm north-east of Irvine, Alberta. Many others secured their hay supply in the same way.

It seems dad and Horace had a camp in partnership with George Webber, a rancher friend of ours south of Dunmore. Anyway, when Webber left the camp, he tied the food supply up in a tree to keep it away from prowlers, human or otherwise, but didn't leave any clue as where to find it. Unable to find the cache, after about three days they started for home, and to hear them tell it, they would have starved to death on the shores of Elkwater Lake if they hadn't met Harry last (who was at that time, building some of the first cottages at the lake), who gave them his lunch and went back to his home west of the lake, for his own dinner.

**1914**

## Little Davis With the Butcher Knife, Equals, Big Condor

Condor and Davis were neighbors, and with two fellows like those two guys there was bound to be trouble. Apparently Davis took Condor's fence down to let his stock into Condor's field. Condor, a big fellow, of course objected, and was leaning over his fence telling Davis what kind of a fellow he was, what he thought about him, and what he was going to do to him. Davis a little fellow, was standing just on the other side of the fence in the road allowance making circles and figure eights all around Condor's person with a butcher knife, and inviting him to just step over the fence so he could start carving his carcass. Condor was a powerful

man and was known to be a brute. But that butcher knife sure evened things up. One morning shortly afterwards, Condor disappeared and was never heard of again. Then, and not until then, did Davis put away his butcher knife.

**About 1909 through 1915**

## "Old Man Tveeten — The Oxen Man"

Before and during the "teen years" on the ranch, we had a neighbor who went by the handle (name) of "Old Man Tveeten — The Oxen Man" and was a real character. He drove oxen for all his power needs and pulled a four horse two pole grain drill (seeder) with five oxen. How he hitched them to do that we never figured

Five oxen doing a four horse job — don't ask me how they were hooked up.

out. Anyone knowing how a ten foot grain drill is built, will know that it is virtually an impossibility. He did a lot of other impossible things too. One was when his oxen wandered away and mixed in with the thousands of head of wild cattle (I don't mean species, I mean untamed) around the Many Island Lakes, six or seven miles away, he walked out to the lake, picked out his oxen and drove

them back home. Those cattle at that time, not being used to seeing anyone on foot were ready to attack at any moment. Anyone else would have been gored and trampled to death, but not him. They would form a great circle around him with their heads inwards and he would walk around the inside of it and chase his oxen out of the ring as he got to them and then take them home. At other times the cattle along with his oxen would form a long line. He would walk along the line in front of them and with the stick he always carried, tapped his oxen out of the line and drove them home.

Another impossible thing he did was build a fence right through a lake (Tveeten Lake). I don't know if anyone else could have done it, but he did. One day I watched him awhile from the shore. All you could see of his team of oxen was the top half of their heads. The wagon-box was tied down to the running gear so it couldn't float away. The posts were floating around in the wagon-box and he was standing in water almost to his middle. (He wasn't digging post holes of course.) But pushed the sharpened post down through the water and drove them in with a big mallet. He put the wire on too, but I didn't see how he did that and am still wondering how he managed it. The fence, with intermittent repairs is still standing. But he was most noted for his giant sized "holler". He had lots of practise hollering at his oxen, and on a quiet evening, could be heard five miles away.

He had always been a bachelor but had a great love for children, especially half-grown boys. I well remember the many happy hours we spent with him in his little shack. It contained a bed, stove, table, chairs and a few other essentials. I also remember that he got the Chicago Herald, which contained several pages of comics. "The Katzenjammer Kids", "Maggie and Jiggs", (That's before it was called "Bringing up Father"), and others. Anyway, as he got the comics, he pasted them on the walls and ceiling, up one side across the ceiling and down the other in columns with our favorite comics in plain view. He continued across the room from end to end, column after column including the ends. And then started all over again. We read the funnies (that's all they were called in those days) as they progressed along the room, taking in the ceiling by lying on our backs on the bed. If we missed a few weeks we could always go back and catch up as long as we kept ahead of the progressing column. Papers of any kind in those days were a scarce commodity out on the prairie, and the above practice assured him that every boy for miles around would pay him a visit several times each year.

Every Saturday morning "Old Man Tveeten", and his team of oxen could be seen slowly crossing the valley a couple of miles east of the ranch (farm in those days) on their way to the town of Walsh. They stayed in town for most of the day for business and pleasure. Then towards evening, together they started for home, but they weren't together long. Tveeten was a fast walker — the oxen anything but. We would see him crossing the valley on his way home at a little under five miles per hour. An hour later the oxen and wagon would slowly come into view, and after a long time would finally merge with the rolling terrain at the foot of the next range of hills. In the spring during one of these weekly trips, they were hauling home a load of cedar fence posts. The binding came loose, Tveeten being far ahead didn't know, and the posts fell off at almost equal intervals all the way home. During the summer, whenever he happened to be near the wagon and a post at the same time, he picked it up and threw it into the wagon. The clean-up procedure lasted all summer, and a few posts never did get picked up until many years later when the land became part of the ranch.

**"The Legend of the Treasure"**

In the fall of 1914 there was a bright red glow in the sky to the north of the ranch — a prairie fire! We all know too well the horrors those conflagrations can and do cause. To check on its nearness, dad and my brother climbed the hill to the north. The prairie fire was a big one but too far away to be a threat to us and was travelling in a direction that would pass us by even if it continued to burn. But they saw something that has been a mystery ever since. Old Man Tveeten had four lanterns forming a square (the lanterns spaced a few rods apart) and walking back and forth between them as if trying to locate something. He being an odd character and accustomed to doing odd things, after telling the family what they had seen, promptly forgot about it until years later. He was known to be a rich man, but when his two nephews came over from Norway as beneficiaries, and to settle his estate, there was no bank account and no sign of where all his money was. In discussing the mystery of the missing money with them, we thought he might have been burying it that fall night years before. The nephews tried locating it, and so has every succeeding owner, unless the present one. The approximate area has been prodded and pulverized to no end. But as dad and Horace said, if they had had any idea what the possibilities of that night were, they could have set out some geometrical markers so they could have been used later if needed. In this case by his nephews. But "Old Man

Tveeten" — "The Oxen Man", was long remembered, not for his money, not for his eccentricity, but for his generosity, his manliness, his fairness, his honesty, and his all around humanitarianism.

**1913-15**

## Queenie

In the early days out on the ranch we had an overly generous supply of coyotes, and there's nothing they like better than chicken for supper. And for some unknown reason, our hens would wander away in the late afternoon to come strolling home just as it was going dark. A coyote is hard to see at anytime, but at dusk, he's practically invisible, and for him, sneaking up at that time of day and grabbing a chicken was like shooting fish in a barrel. So we acquired a hound, and her name was Queenie. (A coyote hound most people called her.) She may have been a heintz hound (57 different varieties) for all I know. But she was long, slim, well fed and powerful, and could easily streak across the prairie at nearly fifty miles per hour, but she wouldn't bite anything more vicious than a hot dog. She was always on the lookout, and if a coyote came within a mile of the place she was after him. (He was completely safe as she wouldn't bite, but he didn't know that.) She would take off at full speed, and the coyote would see her coming when she was still about a half a mile away. Then it would take off for places unknown, but by the time he had put a little over a half mile under him, she would come roaring up behind, scaring him into overdrive and would keep him in overdrive so long and scare him so badly that he never came back. The odd time a coyote would misjudge the speed at which she was travelling and wouldn't really get underway until it was too late. She would crash into him at full speed, and they would go tumbling, rolling and sliding for nearly one hundred yards. After that coyote got on his feet, he didn't need any more chasing; he had just one thing on his mind; some nice quiet safe place, miles and miles from there.

Her high speed was often her undoing. A lot of the time she was travelling so fast she couldn't see where she was going. I've seen her run into a barbed wire fence and cut herself, but luckily, never badly.

If she was chasing something headed towards a building, and it turned off to one side, she would keep going straight ahead and would see the building only in time to slow up enough to turn sideways and bash into it without hurting herself. She just couldn't

slow up or stop in a hurry. The efficiency of her brakes didn't match the efficiency of her motor.

Rabbits can't run down hill worth a darn; neither could Queenie. One day south of the buildings I was approaching the brow of the hill when a rabbit shot out over the top into midair and fell into the coulee, rolled and bounced to the bottom, picked itself up and then took off again. A rabbit will not willingly run down hill (They're not built for that kind of travel.) but I guess it was moving along too fast to turn — the reason — Queenie was right on its tail. She too, a split second behind the rabbit shot into midair, fell into the coulee, rolled and bounced to the bottom, picked herself up and took off again after the rabbit. The only difference, the rabbit didn't make a sound, but poor Queenie yelped as if she was having the hide ripped off her, but wasn't hurt a bit.

**1916**

## Horace Ate the Gravy

Years ago, my brother Horace, when a very young man, worked on the Zwick threshing crew. Old Zwick as we called him wasn't a humorist, but a likable character who did some surprising things. But some of his antics turned out funny. In this case, my brother who drove a bundle team was delayed one evening, and by the time he got in for supper, the rest had progressed considerably through the evening meal. They were at the Tohm place, and Mrs. Tohm hadn't thickened the gravy from the roast beef but had put it on the table to be used as was. Horace coming in late sat in the empty chair next to Mr. Zwick. Always full of the dickens, he handed the soup plate of beef gravy (which was in a plate instead of a gravy boat) to Horace and said, "here's your soup, we've had ours." Horace thought it pretty strong stuff, but if the rest had eaten theirs, he couldn't see any reason why he shouldn't eat his. Just as he was polishing off the last of the gravy Mrs. Tohm came in; she exploded fit to blow the house apart. When the tirade died down, Horace said, "This guy," pointing to Zwick, "told me that the others had had their soup and that this was mine." Knowing that these things could happen when Zwick was around she transferred her wrath to Zwick, and if he hadn't known what kind of a fellow he was up 'til then, he did afterwards, because he sure had it explained to him that night.

**1916 and 1917**

## August Johnson and His Grant Six

At that time, August Johnson, then a bachelor and resident of the north Walsh district, had a Grant Six car. Roads then were trails worn in the prairie by wagons, democrates and buggies. The more the road was used, the deeper the ruts. If on a fenced road allowance, the trail was straight, if on the open prairie, it took the path of least resistance, winding up coulees for instance to reduce the incline. Near August's farm was a two mile stretch of deep straight road. He would drive his car (usually on a Sunday morning) to the other end of this stretch of road, turn his car around and start it back down the road at a snails pace, striking out ahead on foot to shoot gophers, leaving his car to follow by itself, and it would follow the ruts like a train follows the tracks. At times he would be nearly a mile ahead of his car, and when he got to the other end of the road allowance he'd sit down and wait for it to catch up. It was kind of a weird business to watch.

**1917**

## The Custard Pudding Episode

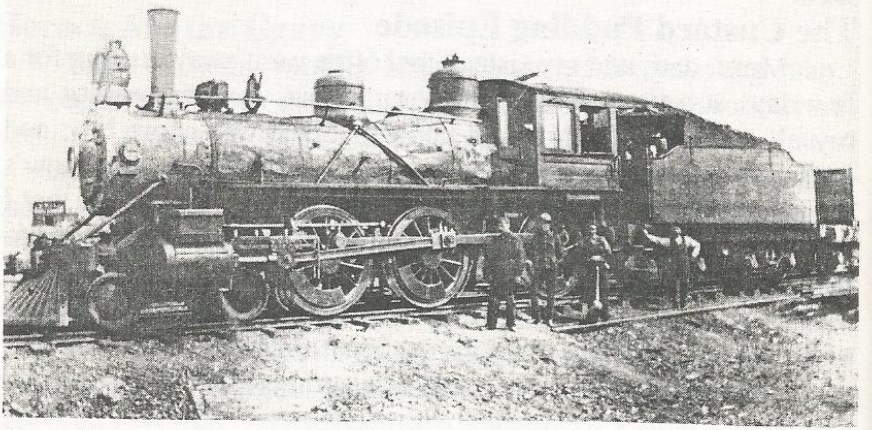
Mom, dad, and my sister Ethel often went away visiting for a few days at a time, leaving my brother six years my senior and myself to look after things at home. Horace was chore boy, and me, cook. Me being very fond of custard pudding thought, now's my chance. Having so decided, I hunted up the largest pan that I could find smaller than the bread kneading pan, and proceeded to build me a custard pudding. Mixing up the necessary ingredients I then put it in the oven. After the elapse of the necessary time, I took it out of the oven to cool — a beautiful work of the culinary art. Having given it time to cool, I says to myself, "Why wait 'til meal time, what's the matter with right now?" Using a serving spoon intent on partaking of my handiwork I found that it wouldn't penetrate my "beautiful" custard; it was solid as a rock. Disgruntled, I threw it out into the yard. It came out of the dish as though it was a grindstone, rolled a few feet and flopped over. The old pig saw me and came to investigate. She turned it over a couple of times with her nose and then walked away in disgust. We had seventy-five hens at the time and they took over from there; scratched and pecked, and in three days it was no more. No one seemed to have the answer to my catastrophe 'til twenty-five years later. When I told a friend that the little I was able to chop loose made my tonsils ache, she said, "Evidently, you wanting it sweet,

had in a mistake, put in an overly generous amount of salt instead of sugar. And the milk must have turned sour as soon as you heated it. That combination caused the whole thing to be unpalatable and to solidify."

**Early 1900's**

## The Famous Silk Trains

Back in the early part of this century, the silk trains tore across the continent with their throttles wide open. How come? Years ago, raw silk was shipped by boat from the orient to our west coast. Because the raw silk deteriorated quickly, the length of time it took to transport it from its source to the silk mills in the east was crucial. So after arriving at the west coast, it was transferred as quickly as possible from the boat to the waiting silk train. The train consisted of about twenty-six specially built high-speed silk cars and a high speed steam locomotive and a caboose.



One of the speed demons that pulled the silk trains across the continent with their throttle wide open and giving it all they had.

The conductor, engineer, fireman, breakies and guards were all aboard by the time the train was ready to roll. And as the engineer eased the throttle forward (considering the era in which it happened and the technology available at that time) the greatest race in history had begun. Through the canyons, over the passes, through the mountains, across the prairie, through the park land of Manitoba and the forests and crags of eastern Canada without a moments delay.

At that time, about thirty-five miles per hour was the average top speed of all landlocked transportation. But a silk train would flash through the countryside and bear down on a railway division at seventy miles an hour where another high speed locomotive and crew stood ready and waiting to take up the race. The train would all but skid to a stop at which moment the guards (usually six of them) three on either side, with sawed off shotguns jumped off to guard against sabotaging of the train. In a few minutes the necessary changes had been made and the train was off again on its wild dash across the continent. Why all the rush? There was a little competition involved with Jim Hill's Railway (The Great Northern), and of course the fastest carrier got the lions share of the business. The race was not so much a neck and neck sort of thing as it was time involved. And as the Canadian Pacific silk train flashed through the days and screamed through the nights, the crew knew it was quite possible that one of its counterparts, a Jim Hill high speed special south of the Canadian American border was roaring across the midwestern plains.

The track was always cleared ahead of these speed demons of bygone days. So the station agents and operators knew just where the trains would be and when. The news always got around, and whenever a silk train passed through, it was what we would now call "a happening."

Five miles south of the ranch, through the Walsh Flat, ran the Canadian Pacific Railway's main line. So all the young folks on the ranch would saddle up and ride to the low hills skirting the flat. Farther west of our vantage point the track ran close to these hills. We couldn't see the train, but on a quiet day could follow its progress by watching the smoke. The smokestack being just below the edge of the hill, the smoke puffed up a couple of yards and then streamed back in a rope for miles, just as though it was being placed there by a gigantic cake icing tool being moved along at a terrific rate. Then the train broke into view out on the flat. It was visible for approximately five miles, and in less than five minutes it was gone. Only the rope of smoke remained.

It was an intriguing sight in those days, and there wasn't a boy living who saw one of those trains flash by that didn't imagine himself at the controls and wishing that there were a few more notches on that old throttle just to get this thing really moving. I was one of those boys.

Sure we see trains travelling as fast as that now, but if we now saw a train flash past at one hundred and forty miles an hour, we

too would take notice. All along the line there would be singles or groups of people out watching those trains streak by.

I understand that the Canadian Pacific Railway finally won out and, transported the bulk of the raw silk across the continent until the factories were built near the source of supply and the finished product was shipped in by boat and distributed by the normal carriers of that day. And of all the silk trains that I've watched roll by, everyone was on time almost to the second.

I have never seen a complete silk train go west, but you'll still see some of the silk train cars sometimes mixed in with the regular boxcars. They are a compact car still painted a dull dark red.

**1918-1919**

## The Flu Epidemic

Everyone for miles around came down with the flu except, my sister Ethel, my brother Horace, a neighbor, Mr. Otto Brandt, Mrs. Alex Bechtold (who later became my wonderful mother-in-law), and George Hamilton and myself.

Not knowing Ida's (my wife's) mother then, I wasn't aware of her heroic efforts to nurse her own large family and surrounding neighbors, till years later.

George Hamilton and I, though only fourteen years old, made a valiant effort to help wherever it was needed.

Mom and dad were very bad. Ethel nursed them, and made soup etc. for the sick in the district, which Horace delivered either in our old Ford or Ratslaff's Brisco. He also did the chores in the district that were left undone because of sickness. I helped out as best a fourteen year old boy could, and took care of our place and helped with the chores at near by farms. Mr. Otto Brandt went around nursing from home to home. (There were no enemies in those days.) Everyone needed help and they got help as it was possible for us to give it to them. The six of us did our very best but still too many of them slipped away. Many years afterwards, Mr. Brandt passed on, then my sister Ethel too slipped away, then George Hamilton, now Ida's mom — I wonder what their reward is for their struggle against impossible odds during the Flu Epidemic of 1918-1919. Of the six of us who stood shoulder to shoulder and fought day and night the battle against the grim killer, only my brother Horace and myself are left. At the time of writing this, my brother is very ill — I hope he makes it; but if he doesn't, I'll be the only one of the six left to remember. Many are the sad memories of when the day came when we needed to go back to a stricken home

no more. In those days Mr. Brandt professed to being an atheist, but be that as it may, he certainly had a great big christian heart. But there was one heroic person we must not forget. A Dr. Fisher. In an effort to help everyone, he taxed himself far beyond the imagination of any one who did not see his efforts.

**Dr. Fisher and the Flu — 1918-1919**

Poor Doc. Fisher, he was so tired out it was hard for him to give specific instructions. He called every few days to see mom and dad, but with the mustard plasters he prescribed for them, he didn't give instructions as to the mixture or the procedure or the length of time to leave them on. Ethel, not knowing, and mom and dad too sick to know or care, the plaster went on full strength and STAYED ON — mom's 28 hours and dad's 33 hours. That was the limit of their endurance. Later, Dr. Fisher said, "I think that's what saved their lives." As for Ethel, he just put his hand in his pocket and out came a handful of pills which he gave to her with the instructions to eat one every little while, neglecting to tell her that they were aspirin and to take them with water.

To keep the house warm we had just bought a heater, a new-fangled self-feeder. Not knowing how to operate it, we dumped in two pails of coke. That was the only kind of fuel we could get in town at that time. The self-feeder works on the principal of, as the coal is reduced to ashes it lets more coal down on to the fire. If you shake down the ashes, more coal is fed in the same way. In this case, the coke, instead of coal, not producing any ashes, there was no check on the feeding of the fuel. So — more fire more fuel — more fuel more fire. The stove went a dull red to a bright red to a dull yellow to almost white. Had we pushed the top of the stove sideways, it would have bent over like a soft piece of wire. There being no ashes in the ashpan the floor blistered from the heat 'til we put a big roasting pan of water under the stove, refilling it as the water boiled away. The stove pipes, starting at the stove, were white, yellow and then red for over fourteen feet. The pipes didn't catch fire (which would have been very serious especially with mom and dad in bed very ill), because the stove and pipes were new, therefore clean. In order to keep the house temperature down to a livable degree, we had to open the outside door even though it was thirty-three below outside.

**1919**

## How Horace Became An Untouchable

My brother rode for J. D. MacDonald (always referred to as

Mac) in the years around 1920. One bright hot morning in the course of his work he was to meet Tom Hargrave on the north side of Hargrave's Lake, in the early days, named Mullins Lake after Tom Mullins.

Horace, landing up on the south shore and the lake being full and the shortest distance to where he was to meet Tom being straight across the Lake, that route was chosen.

My brother being the best bronc rider I have ever known, it usually was his lot to uncomplicate those horses that had a real dislike for domesticity, resisted it violently and made no bones about it.

It was 11:00 A.M. and hot as all get out; his horse was thirsty and Horace was hot, so while his horse was taking a long, much needed drink, Horace, unnoticed by his noble steed, stripped off his clothes, climbed into the saddle, tied his clothes behind the cantle and when his horse had finished drinking, he rode out into deeper water. Then slipping out of the saddle, grabbed he ahold of the bronc's tail and they headed for the opposite shore.

All went well and they reached the far side of the lake without incident. Then things started to happen. The horse walked out of the lake and shook itself — Horace walked out of the lake a few moments later and shook himself — whoops — I mean, after he walked out of the water he stood there in nothing but his skin of homo sapien pink that you'd love to touch — then his horse spied him, and that was the end of their close association for quite some time. No sir! That horse wasn't having anything to do with any animal that didn't have hair on it.

The hillside north of the lake is virtually a bed of cacti, and Horace in his bare feet and running around amongst that cacti trying to catch his horse while the sun blazed down on his unprotected exterior with the temperature well over 100 degrees fahrenheit in the shade (had there been any), was a situation which undoubtedly could have stood some improving.

Tom Hargrave, an hour or so later, showed up at the appointed time, but couldn't resist the temptation to watch for a few minutes from behind a nearby hill the drama that was unfolding out there on the prairie.

Tom then decided enough was enough, but it wasn't until Horace's hide was sunburned to an almost deep red that he had shown up to ride down the hill and catch Horace's horse and snub it to his saddle horn while Horace retrieved his clothes, and right

then and there, Horace promised himself, his horse and Tom Hargrave, to never again pull that one.

Everything again being back to normal, except Horace's roasted hide causing him to be an untouchable, he, and, Tom with a smirk on his face, rode off to attend to the job they had started out to do in the first place.

**1920's**

## Some People Just Can't Be Told

In the 1920's, I spent a lot of time in the area between Gull Lake and Shaunavon Saskatchewan, working, peddling horses and just being there.

I don't remember the name of the store, but it was on the opposite side of the street from the Smith Garage which burned down. The cause of that fire was: the car motor was left running and as the garage attendant was putting the gas nozzle in the gas tank filler opening, it caused a spark and the whole works went up in smoke; garage, contents and all.

Oh yes, I was talking about the store. Anyway, the management got a warning by letter that at exactly 12:00 o'clock midnight on a certain date, three people would drive up to the store in a car, break into the store and rob the place. Every one involved including the management took it to be a crank message. But the town cop, though a little dubious about the possibilities, he decided it wouldn't hurt to check. So at 12:00 o'clock sharp he was on hand, and sure enough the trio — two men and one woman — arrived in a car as scheduled.

Just as they started to break in, he showed up on the scene with the intention of arresting them. But they scattered, he, being a little fellow and not too fleet afoot, decided he could never catch the men, but might be able to catch the woman and hold her for evidence. So when she took off up the back alley he was in close pursuit. She ran about a block and a half and then stopped — he made a flying tackle, and that was his mistake — he met flying fists and tactics that he had never encountered before.

It was a moonlit night; the town slept; and so did our noble cop. When he came to some time later, he found that the store had been robbed, the trio had fled, and that he had been through something and he wasn't quite sure it wasn't a meat grinder.

The trio used those same tactics once too often (for themselves, that is) because, by three or four robberies later, their messages had finally gotten through to the authorities and at the

next job they were met by a few cops that were in no mood to play games. That landed them in the hoosegow.

We heard later that the 'woman', was a man dressed in women's clothing and had been a professional boxer, and although our cop was really tough, he was no match for those circumstances. He was beaten-up to the extent that he was close to being hospitalized, and that experience, for awhile, made him really hard to get along with.

We were proud of him and admired him for what he tried to do — but it's a cruel world — for far too long afterwards whenever he showed up in public someone would ask, "chased any women lately?" That didn't help matters any either and it wasn't even fair.

**1915 through 1926**

## Good Old School Days

The Clover Hill School District (Irvine, Alberta) seemed to have had more than its share of unusual teachers. One was a civil engineer from Quebec. He always swam smoking his pipe and

Old times, old memories, old friends. Clover Hill school class of early 1920's — Irvine, Alberta. Back row, L. to R. — Fred Neubauer, Jake Neubauer, Ben Brandt, Tom Wood, Marie Gutterud. Second row, L. to R. — Carl Brandt, Henry Neubauer, George Hamilton, Johnny Glock, Millie Glock. Front row, L. to R. — Thorvald Gutterud, Claudia Brandt, Helga Gutterud, Ruth Brandt.

wearing his hat. Another teacher had amibitions to become a real Westerner. He wore a fancy shirt, a ten-gallon hat and cowboy boots. In fact, when he came to school he looked like Tom Mix or Hoot Gibson of cowboy movie fame. Somewhere in this procession of educators was a male teacher who had a skin you loved to touch. His hands and face were an effeminate white, and the pupils had a sneaking suspicion that he used coldcream. He always smelled as though he had just stepped out of a bubble bath. Then there was the long-distance runner who held several medals. This teacher influenced me — one of his pupils — to become a runner as well. We often took off across the prairie after school for a practice run. We jogged along until suppertime making certain that we completed out practice race at some home in the district where there was a good chance of getting supper.

Next came a teacher who had a checker-complex. Recess extended into an hour and the noon hour into two in order to complete the finals of the checker tournament. Then all the students made up the lost time by staying in after school hours.

The most unique teacher that the Alberta Clover Hill School had was a man named Babington. On the first morning of school he took the strap and burned it in the stove before all the students and then warned us with these words, "If any of you misbehave, what will happen to you will make you wish I had kept that strap instead." No one was ever brave or inquisitive enough to find out what the new punishment would have been. Then he took all the textbooks and stacked them away in the cupboard with the explanation that they were no longer required. He did permit each student to retain his reader and exercise books.

His "different" method of teaching was to give a lecture on some topic to each of the seven grades in school and then write thought-provoking questions on the blackboard for the students to answer. The man had a wonderful memory and anything that had to be copied by the students flowed off his chalk like magic. He never referred to textbooks but geared his lecture topics to the actual needs of the students. The children became so interested in their work that three-thirty didn't mean too much to them. Around five o'clock Babington would say, "Well children it's supper time. I guess we'd better break it off for today."

Everything went fine until the inspector made his annual call. When the official entered the school he found the teacher with his feet up on the desk reading a newspaper. Outside of a few magazines and current newspapers, Babington's desk was as bare as

Mother Hubbard's cupboard. It was almost too much for the inspector to discover also that all the prescribed textbooks had been piled in the cupboard and never used. He angrily paced up and down the classroom all the while making uncomplimentary remarks about the teacher. Eventually, Babington broke in quietly with, "Sir! Let me say something now. Would you ask any or all the pupils the hardest questions you can think of for each grade?" The inspector agreed. He tested every pupil, grade by grade and subject by subject in rapid succession but no matter how difficult he made the problems the youngsters came up with the right answers. After half an hour of such questions the surprised official threw up his hands almost in despair and said, "I simply can't believe it!" He stomped out of the room still shaking his head and never returned as long as Mr. Babington taught in that school.

In another rural school south-east of Walsh, Alberta a large steer had wandered into the yard and eventually found its way into the barn. A boy who had noticed the animal, raised his hand to be excused, then crept stealthily to the stable and shut the door. During recess the boys cornered the steer and as many as possible climbed aboard. By this time the steer became frantic and when it bucked, the air was filled with flying boys, some were propelled, while others jumped to save themselves. Someone finally opened the stable door and the annoyed beast dashed for its freedom spilling the remaining two or three youngsters in the process. Soon a boy ran into school and excitedly yelled to the teacher, "We need your help in the barn!"

"What for?" she asked.

"Well, one of the boys is hung up on a spike. It went in at his mouth and came out through his cheek. We're having trouble getting him unhooked."

The above: Reprinted from the Little White Schoolhouse by John Charyk with the permission of Western Producer Prairie Books.

**1915 through 1926**

## Our Addicted Checker Player

Our addicted checker player teacher told us about one of his experiences: It seems that in one of the districts where he taught, due to the topography, the school district was longer than it was wide. And members of the first school board all lived at the same end, so as expected, the schoolhouse was built at that end of the district so their kids wouldn't have far to go to attend school. This

made it a long trip to school for the children at the other end of the district.

Those good people tried many times to have the little school that was built on skids, moved to a more central location but were always voted down. During the summer the controversy died out, but when the first snow fell, things happened — one in particular.

Due to there being nowhere for Mr. Shoemaker to board, the school board suggested that he curtain off a corner of the school room and set up a cot and campstove plus the bare necessities of survival. This would assure that every morning the school room would be warm for the students when they arrived, and they also suggested that while he was at it he might as well be the janitor to boot.

Well, that first snow came on a moonlit November night. Everything was quiet and it was warm and cosy in his little cot and Mr. Shoemaker had fallen into a deep sleep when he was awakened by a dull rumble and a swaying sensation as though he was moving. Well, he was. The good people from the other end of the district had hooked onto the little school with several teams of horses and the little school was rumbling quietly as it slid smoothly over the snow covered frozen ground. Next morning, Shoemaker opened classes as usual — but this time the shoe was on the other foot — for the other guys that is.

Centralization came later but I might as well deal with it now.

**Late 1930's**

## Centralization and School Bussing

During the late 1930's, centralized schools were introduced into our educational system in large numbers. This created a need for school busses to take the rural children to the centralized school in the morning and back home at night. This made a pretty long day for the younger children, and those of us who had young children of school age really wondered if the alleged benefits of the larger schools were really worthwhile when our little kids came home half frozen and all tuckered out.

At first the busses, (if they could be called that?) were usually some farmers truck with a grain box furnished with a couple of wooden benches and a tarp tied over the top of the box. Later, new truck chassis were purchased and, a more comfortable van like compartment was built on the chassis and was also heated somewhat from the cab heater as the rear cab window was removed and a corresponding opening left in the van, and the space between the

cab and van compartment surrounding the opening, was closed off from the outside with canvas, leaving a direct passage between the two compartments for heating and communication. Now we have the familiar yellow busses that are a far cry from the original mode of transportation. And most of the rural roads are now quite passable except, under extreme circumstances — but it wasn't always that way.

In the late 30's, and early 40's, when travelling conditions, especially on the back roads were really bad, all kinds of systems were used to get the kids to school. In the wintertime, those roads were often impassable for conventional vehicles and the following are some of the systems used: When the going with the school bus became impossible, the bus driver moved to town till conditions improved, and until then, he would leave town early in the morning and drive out on his route as far as he could possibly get and wait there with the warm bus till the farmer with whom he had made previous arrangements delivered the children to him. The farmer would use a big tractor or a four horse team to pull a bobsleigh full of kids or, in the case of fewer children, a lighter sleigh and just a two horse team was used.

Nearing spring when there would still be plenty of snowbanks around plus a few mudholes with a washout or two thrown in for good measure, travelling became quite complicated.

There were seven students from the ranch, and in the morning, they would start out with a tractor and a flatdeck, drive to the second last mudhole or washout on the way to town, then climb into the truck parked on the other side and drive to the last impassable place, and the school bus would be waiting for them on the far side and they would then be on the last leg on their way to school. One particularly bad spring, six of us, each spotted a tractor at one of the six mudholes on the way to town. Everyone used them if needed, coming or going, including the school bus, but the time came when the farmers needed their tractors, but luckily, by then the roads were usually passable. But if we had early rains, those mudhles would again raise their ugly heads. So what then? I remembered seeing or being told of a chap performing a somewhat similar form of transportation, that carried a long rope and when in difficulty, tied it to his bumper, stretched it out to beyond the mudhole or whatever, and the riders, wishing to be on their way, willingly got on the other end of the rope and gave it the old heave-ho and they were on their way again. The school bus driver mentioned his problem to me, so I passed the rope idea on to

him, and as far as I know, having twenty-one, more than willing kids, his problem must have been solved because the school bus thereafter made its daily trips inspite of high water and deep mudholes.

**The 1920's**

## Old Harry and His Nearly Lopped Off Finger

It seems that Harry Hamilton (old Harry as we called him), and Oscar Soderquist, and I believe, Doug Staniforth, were helping Harry Jacobson to fix the pump in his 85 foot well when the chain or rope holding the pipe slipped. Old Harry was holding onto the pipe with his bare hands while guiding it back down into the well, but instead of letting go of the pipe when the chain or rope slipped, he hung on, hoping to stop the pump pipe from continuing on its wild journey back down into the well.

Well, he was not successful and when the pump head hit the base, Harry's bare hands were in between. What a mess! His index finger was really "mashed" but miraculously the bone wasn't broken. Old Harry believing that his finger was a complete loss, decided the best thing to do with it was chop it off. He said he'd do it himself but was sure he'd jerk his finger away just before the axe hit it and that wouldn't get them anywhere. So Oscar Soderquist volunteered to do the job, and Old Harry then walked over to the firewood chopping block and laid his finger on it and said to Oscar, "I'll look the other way and don't you tell me when you're going to lop it off or I might jerk it away. O.K., I'm ready 'get with it'." Old Harry waited for the best part of a minute but nothing happened. Then he turned his head to see what the holdup was, and there was Oscar with the axe poised for the operation but couldn't bring himself to part Old Harry from his finger.

Then Mrs. Jacobson said, "I can't lop it off but I'll see what I can do otherwise."

She molded the finger back into some semblance of its former self and did a professional job of bandaging it. We won't say anything about the blood — that's a whole story in itself.

Over the weeks that followed, Mrs. Jacobson dressed it faithfully whenever it needed dressing and in time the old mashed finger again became its former self.

**Late teens of the 1900's, and, the early 1920's**

## Irvine's First Gas Station

Mallanie was our first gas station operator. He had a station just east of the town of Irvine. He sold, I believe, "Imperial"

gasoline, oil and greases. During those years, Buffalo oils and greases made by the "Prairie City Oil Company" were very popular. He probably sold those too. The gas was sold in square cans. They held five gallons each, you could buy them singly or by the case, which was two five gallon cans in a divided wooden box. Those were taken home to fill our gas tanks as needed. The bulk gas came in forty-five gallon steel barrels and if filling up at the "station", the gas was measured out in a one or two gallon measure and then poured through a funnel into your gas tank. And at that time, most gas tanks were under the front seat, also the filler cap, which necessitated removing the front seat cushion. A few models had the gas tank under the cowl and the odd roadster had it behind the seat.

The five gallon cans were used for a great variety of things; coal oil (kerosene) cans, water pails by cutting the tops out of them and affixing a handle, well pails and grain buckets. And we cowboys had a very unusual but effective way of using them, which is mentioned elsewhere in this narrative. And I might mention that at that time gas was fifty to sixty cents per gallon and tires were guaranteed for 5,000 miles.

## Early 1920's

## The Harvest Gang

During my late teen years, I knew the boys, but was not one of what was known as the "Harvest Gang." They were a group of sixteen young men who took care of the local seasonal jobs during the spring and summer, and then each fall, migrated to the grain farming areas of the west to harvest the year's crop. There were no combines then. It was stooks, bundle teams, threshing machines and all the rest. And by the time threshing was completed, winter was not far away, so the whole group moved into the Chinese restaurant in Walsh, Alberta, and occupied the rooms on the 2nd. floor. They also had all their meals at the restaurant except occasionally when the odd one might be visiting with friends.

The chief pastime was gambling at cards with the strangest set up I have ever seen. Whoever won, paid the days expenses for the whole group. Each one had put aside enough money during the working season to pay his winter expenses at the restaurant. So the unique result was: that since winner paid all, by the time spring came around things were pretty well evened up dollar wise, and the group as a whole had had a winter's entertainment; their living

expenses paid; their expense savings consumed; were free of debt and all set for another year of work.

Public gambling in those days was strictly prohibited, and had they been caught at it, regardless of the fact that no one eventually won or lost, they would have been in real big trouble. So Lee, the Chinese gentleman who owned the restaurant, kind of stood guard behind the cashier's counter, and if some one entered whom he didn't know, his greeting of good evening or good afternoon warned the boys, and all evidence of gambling almost instantly disappeared. If he knew the person entering, and he would cause the boys no difficulties, his greeting would be, "Hello Joe" or "Hello Bob", etc.

**In the 1920's**

## Just to Prove a Point

Years ago, neighbors used to gather on a Sunday afternoon in groups of as many as twenty at different district homes just to visit and play games etc. One Sunday afternoon, the neighbors happened to gather at the home of George and Maggie Webber. Being with George and Maggie was enough to make any afternoon an exciting one. But add a few extras and things really got to popping.

A young fellow, not deemed to be too bright, started an argument about dynamite and michellite. He claimed that dynamite blew up and michellite blew down, and he had brought along a considerable amount of michellite to prove his point. Everyone in general thought he was a bit off queue, and his argument convinced no one. But when he produced the explosive; put it on the ground; attached a fuse and put a tin can over the works and sat on it, they were amused. But when he lit the fuse, that was something else again — everyone fled in terror and didn't stop or look back 'til they heard the terrific boom. Turning, they expected the wise guy to have completely disappeared. But when the dust had settled, there he was, sitting nonchalantly in the crater he had just produced — they never argued with that guy again, not knowing to what ends he might go to prove his point.

**About 1920**

## Joe Baker Went Green On Us

My brother Horace, Fred Neubauer our neighbor, and I, went to visit Joe Baker a friend of ours near Many Island Lakes. Being winter, we took along our skates. During the afternoon we all went skating. At that time, Joe was just becoming a man at about twenty

years of age and, his way, at that time of becoming a man was to learn to chew tobacco. This, he was doing with gusto; a quarter of a plug at a time when he somehow started sliding backwards on his skates. Oh! Oh! there was a piece of timber frozen in the ice which arrested the backward progress of his feet, but not the rest of him. Wop! down he went — the tobacco went down too — down his gullet that is, and I never saw a person get sicker quicker in my life. Poor Joe, he went a beautiful pea green; we were sure we were going to lose him. But he survived, learned to chew tobacco and did so for many many years.

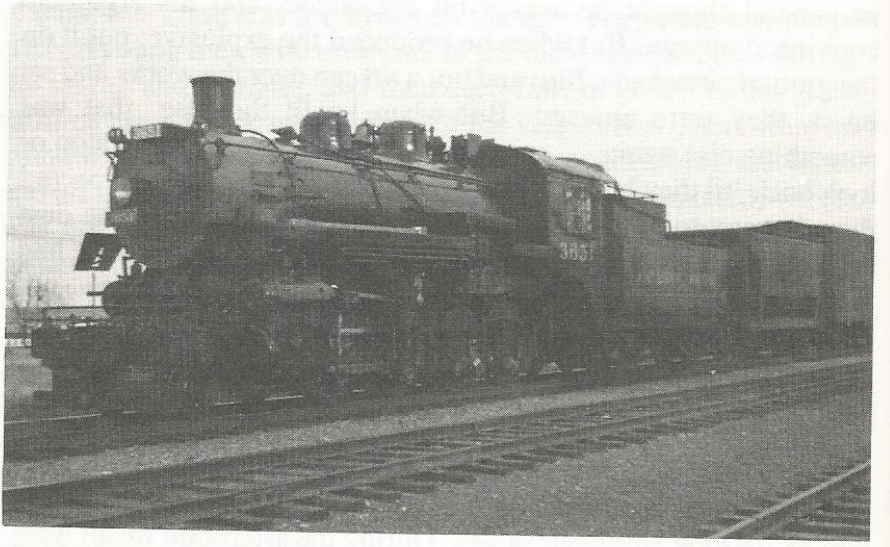
**Appendix — March 22/75**

Joe has gone now, and Fred passed away some years ago. My brother Horace and I are the only ones left of the foursome. But as we go about living our twilight years, memories of bygone days often drift back to that long ago when Fred and Joe, though they may not have been very conventional, were sure a lot of fun.

**1920's**

## Of the Canadian Railways of Yesteryears

In the 1920's, long before the diesels took over from the steamers about 1954, the great steam locomotives transversed the reaches of the endless prairie. The railway ran through a wide flat valley about five miles south of the ranch. And as those mighty institutions roared across the silent plains, as they approached each



The last of the mighty steam moguls that transversed the continent, until the diesels took over in 1954.

crossing they let loose a mighty blast that reverberated far out over the hills. And on a quiet day or night we could stand in the yard on the old ranch and listen to the progress of the train as it called to have each crossing cleared as it made its way down the valley.

As the era of the old faithful steamers came to a close, nostalgia gripped many an oldtimer's heart as he drifted in memory along the avenue of time, through his boyhood days, his adult years, and now, in the twilight of his life he can still hear in memory on a frosty morning those long drawn out haunting wails as they trail off into the eons of time and transcend into emotional moments of the past, and remain a part of his being, (for him), forever.

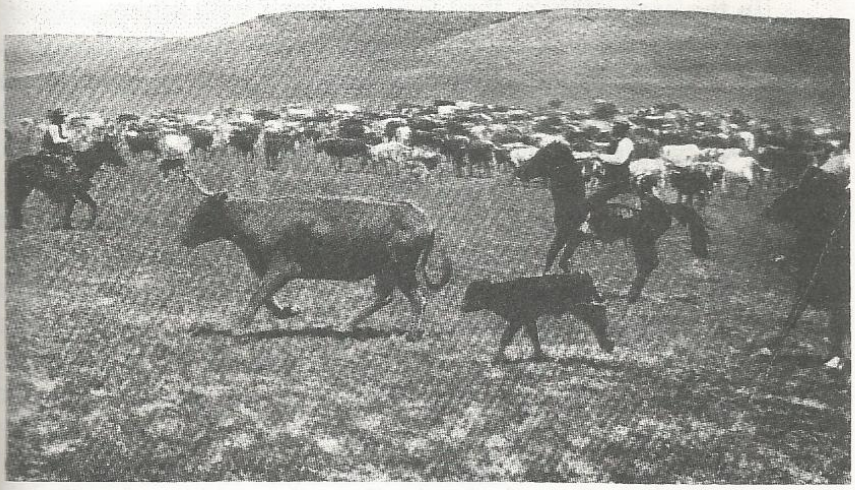
**Early Days 1920's**

## Oldtime Roundups

After the days of the chuckwagon, the wrangler and his rotunda and the night camps, came the "Oldtime Roundups" of the early 1920's.

Those Oldtime Roundups weren't all moonlight and roses. Lots of times there was moonlight, but never any roses.

At times it would rain, sometimes for days and we would be soaked. Sure we had slickers and chaps, but the rain got to us anyway. After riding all day drenched to the skin, we would hit for the nearest ranch for the night. At times, because of our numbers,



They were motley herds: just like some herds today, but they weren't in any way exotic.

accommodation was inadequate. So we just found the softest place available, stacked our wet clothes in a corner, lay down and went to sleep. Next morning we put our cold, wet clothes back on and went to work. Sometimes it wasn't feasible to even take off our wet clothes. We just slept in them. Other times it was sleeping out under the stars. This, everything else being compatible, was a pleasant experience. Many a cowboy found his real inner self, as he lay there watching the heavens. But the life we lived contributed to sprains, broken bones, torn ligaments, bruises to spare and to rope burns, and all kinds of inclement weather also added their toll. So if you see an old cowboy all stove up, making his ungainly way down the sidewalk, just remember that he didn't get that way from taking up knitting.

Frank Reesor of the south Walsh district was, I believe, our champion "bone buster." He had broken twenty-two bones while he was still a young man — maybe some more since then, or maybe he got to be more careful and only cracked a few. And I might add, that with him as with many others, bush popping in the Cypress Hills didn't help to eliminate the problems. (Bush popping is flushing stock out of the timber.) And in those days, range cattle were a lot wilder than they are now. And as for meals: every rancher fed all members of the ranching fraternity, so, at meal times, the nearest ranch got stuck with us.

**Early 1920's**

## Pauly Paulson and the Balky Horse

In the early 1920's, Paul Paulson along with others, worked for Dick Gordon near Schuler, Alberta. In the fall, while they were hauling grain to Irvine, Alberta, Pauly, on his way home came across another of Gordon's men stuck on the road with a balking horse. Pauly said, "here, take my team and I'll bring yours, go ahead, I'll be right along." So the man went on home, glad to leave his problem behind. Hours later Pauly came driving into the yard at a fast clip with the team with the balky horse. Normally, Pauly was a quiet uncomplicated fellow, but this night he was quite disturbed. What he had done to cure the horse which never baulked again nobody knows and he never told. But what had disturbed him most, was, when his first attempt to get the horse started backfired. What he had done, was gather dry sage bush, buffalo chips (dried droppings) and whatever he could find that would burn, and built a fire, of what he figured would be of sufficient intensity to have the desired effect, right under the baulking horse.

That started it alright, but it just pulled the wagon right over the fire and balked again. Right about then Pauly became complicated and the horse uncomplicated. We are still wondering what he did, 'cause it takes awful "powerful medicine" to cure a baulky horse for the rest of its days.

**Early 1920's**

## BootLegging and the Moonshiners

Those were the Bootlegging days and we had our share of Bootleggers and home brew artists. One family I remember in particular lived several miles north and a little west of Walsh, Alberta. The police knew about their activities but couldn't catch them redhanded. One day they were certain the family had a supply on hand so decided to search the place. The area being flat, the people saw the car approaching from a distance. Being suspicious, by the time the police arrived they were prepared. They put the booze into two long five gallon watertight cans, then the mother got into bed and "played sick," the two cans were placed one on either side of her and she being a large and quite hefty woman, when a heavy quilt was thrown over the lot, the evidence disappeared. When the police asked if they may search the place, they were told to go ahead, but try to not disturb the missus as she is quite sick. They searched the place, respected the ill and departed as it were, empty-handed. In those days, "hooch" as we sometimes called it was transported in bottles hidden in frozen hides, making the bottles hard to get at. In instrument cases, false bottomed suitcases and even radiators. In one instance I know of (and there were many others), the police noticed that a particular car as it passed, gave off an odd odor. On investigation, they found the radiator filled with boiling hooch; the car had overheated. What people won't do to beat the law! But the police were as ingenious as the bootleggers and could smell out a bottle of liquor regardless of how it was hidden.

Quite often a small business establishment was a "front" for a blind pig operated in a back room; others were entered by an inconspicuous back door in a dark alley. But regardless of the set up, the intent was always the same — sale of illicit liquor.

In the prohibition days of the roaring 20's, bootlegging was the in thing. A young man wanting adventure running liquor across the line (the Canadian-American border) would, if he made a deal with the bootleggers, be supplied with a big powerful fast car. (In those days usually a Studebaker or a Hudson. The idea of

the powerful high speed cars was to outrun the police.) And if he made seven successful trips the car was his. But he had to take all responsibility for what he was doing and if he got shot up or otherwise into trouble that was his headache. And there was some really fast driving done in those days, and mostly on poor gravelled roads. At one time, one of our western police forces used a souped up weighted light delivery truck with the windshield removed and a machine gun mounted on the cowl. In those days there were no cabs; just open trucks with a canvas top that folded down. There were all kinds of tricks and loopholes, some bribery and, looking the other way for a price. A bit of, if you'll scratch my back — "I'll scratch yours. But all in all it was a matter of, the best man won. It had nothing to do with cheap morality or gang threats out here in the west, but a lot of life was a rootin'-tootin'-rip-snorting sort of thing, but without hate. Not like the metropolitan areas in the east. But still we were part and parcel of that era dubbed, "The Roaring Twenties." And we sure roared.

Sandy Walters, a friend of mine, before running a restaurant in Irvine, Alberta, at one time thought he would make a fast buck by hiring out to drive a load of liquor through the Crow's Nest Pass. The roads at that time were narrow and rocky and wandered all over the mountain sides. He was supplied with an old beat up "490" Chevrolette loaded to the hilt with booze, while the owner of the stuff and a henchman drove ahead in a big new high speed car. The police spotted them, mistook them for the culprits and took up the chase. Down and up the mountain roads and trails they went, passed him, around him, and at times, almost over top of him as he hung to the side of the mountain as he plodded along with the payload not knowing when all heck might break loose punctuated by flying bullets. He said that he was never so scared in all his life, but delivered the stuff to the appointed destination; jumped out of the car as though the seat cushion was on fire, ran for the nearest mode of transportation, secured a ride back home and promised himself that never again would he stray from the gentle art of frying ham and eggs.

One example of how liquor was supplied to the Northwestern States: I was told that every day at 4:30 P.M., a truck left Fernie, B.C. with a load of liquor billed for Mexico, which was quite legal, but there were never any reports of it getting there. It evidently was distributed to "blind pigs" and other illegal outlets along the way. But how did it get to Fernie? My suggestion would

be, by the method used in the case involving Sandy Walters, and, other similar operations.

There was a guarded request made, by the officials, to those considered to be prospective recruits for a group of young men with no responsibilities in the line of families or, emotional attachments with the fairer sex, that the officials were trying to organize. In pairs, they were to be supplied with a high powered car and guns and were to act like tourists, but if suspicious of someone running liquor, were to more or less shoot first and ask questions afterwards. (Sort of detectives.) I was, in an offhanded way approached to join if and when it was organized, but for some reason I didn't follow it up — maybe I was scared! The whole thing was clothed in secrecy, and I don't know if the organization was ever formed as I have no proof of its formation or existence as I moved away from the liquor trafficking area.

**1923**

## Mower Magic

My brother Horace broke horses for the Sarnia Ranch south of Walsh in 1923. It was his job to halterbreak, harness and quieten them as much as possible, then drive them at least once on a wagon. The odd one oftener, depending on how they responded to handling. In driving broncs, you hitched them up first with a quiet horse used mostly for that purpose. It's amazing how it will get to know its business, and will teach the new recruit nearly as much as the driver, chastising him by biting and kicking him in order to keep him in line. Then one of the other hired men, necessarily good at handling horses, would also have a quiet horse which he used to drive with broncs. Normally, nothing could happen to make these quiet reliables run away. He was of necessity a good natured uncomplicated creature worth his weight in gold. One day a bronco, after going through the first stages of its new life was hitched up with old faithful onto the mower. The man who was the first to handle the unbroken horse, helped the new driver to "hook up" for the first few times. In the case of a mower, the bronco is always hitched up on the right hand side, the side the cutter bar is on, so that if he tries to run away, he won't pull the cutter bar into the heels of the other horse and maybe cut him. Well, this particular day no one knows what happened, but just as the driver was nicely settled on the mower seat ready to go, something spooked the quiet horse, the bronc followed suit, and right now there was a full scale runaway. They jerked the mower from under the driver

and left him sitting on the ground. In the area of the home ranch are poplar trees all through the low land bordering the creek, so, into the bush and trees they headed at full speed, which is considerable in a runaway, with the mower hooking onto bushes, rocks and trees and bouncing all over the place as eveners and harness broke and scattered along the way. Finally they broke loose from the mower and there the mystery began. My brother rounded up the horses seven miles away, but the mower had completely disappeared — gone — lock, stock and barrel. Just the horses came out on the other side of the wooded area, so it had to be some where amongst the trees; a matter of only several rods from where the runaway team entered the brush and trees to where they came out of it. They looked all the rest of the summer but couldn't find that mower. Finally, when the leaves fell off the trees in the fall and it could be seen, there it was — eight feet up in a tree amongst the branches. Apparently what happened was: the tongue fell down and ran into the ground giving the mower an overhand motion, flipping it into the air. Here the team broke completely loose and the mower landed in the tree branches and stayed there, where they found it in the fall.

**Early 1920's**

## One That Hector McGregor Pulled on MacDonald Ye'll nay be needin' this then

During the years my brother worked for MacDonald, a rancher northeast of Walsh, Alberta: Anyway, "Mac" as he was known, was quite Scotch by nature as well as by name. One day Horace and Mac were riding out in the Many Island Lake area when they met Heck McGregor, a thrifty Scot with a great sense of humour. Anyway, Mac said, "give me a match." Hector did, and Mac held it between his teeth while he dug out a cigarette paper. Holding the paper in the ready, he probed in his pockets for tobacco as was often his wont to do, and then said, "Gosh, I'm out of tobacco." Scotty said as he leaned over and jerked the match from between Mac's teeth, "ye'll nay be needin' this then." and rode away.

Although Mac saw the humour of the situation, he didn't think it should have happened to him.

**Middle 1920's**

## Joe Baker and His Mudhole

At one time, J.B., another friend of ours, after a heavy rain

was pulling cars through a particularly bad mudhole in the road out in the Walsh Flat. His price was $1.00, which was very reasonable for the service given. About noon, along came a smarty-pants salesman and as you'd expect, got stuck. As Joe B. was hooking on to his car he asked, "How much to pull me out?" J.B. said, "Just a buck." The salesman retorted, "That's hi-way robbery and I mean that literally. I'll get out on my own."

After trying for hours and finally getting helplessly mired, he said, "J.B. I guess you can hook on to me for a buck." J.B. said, "I hated to go home and leave you stuck here all night, so I waited, and considering the time I've waited and figuring my time is worth "something," all in all, that will cost you four dollars."

The guy paid it.

**Centering on the 1920's**

## Gas Cans and Horses

In the late 1900's and the early 1920's, most ranchers ran a bunch of horses. They broke them and then sold them to the early farm settlers for work horses to do their farming etc. But before they were broken they were a pretty wild bunch. At the time there was mostly open range, and the horses roamed at large. But they all had a tendency to roam far afield. Especially some of the old mares that would appoint themselves leaders and take off for the distant hills; all the other horses following. Naturally, the ranchers wanted their horses near home where they could keep watch over them and easily pick them up and take them to the ranch for whatever reason they were needed; for branding of colts, for breaking, to be sold, etc.

So it was one of the riders jobs to keep the herds on the home range. After you had found and gathered together fifty to sixty wild unbroken horses about fifteen to twenty miles from home, the real problem was at hand. Several of the old veterans would take off, each in a different direction when you started to move the bunch towards home. This is when jumping onto your horse and galloping away in all directions came very near to being true. But at least some of us learned a trick to get those horses back on their home range in a hurry. If they were going to run anyway, they might as well run in the right direction. In those days, for cars in our area, gasoline was sold in square five gallon tin cans with handles fastened securely on top. Or you could buy a case, which consisted of two five gallon cans in an oblong divided wooden box. But it was the cans we were interested in, not the gas. We'd tie

one of those cans to our saddle, ride out on the range, and after gathering the horses we intended to take home, we tied one end of our lariat to the saddle horn and the other end to the can. Horses will stay pretty well bunched until you start to move them. So the trick was to quietly get them started in the direction you wanted them to go and then drop the can. This would start all of you for home, including your saddle horse. This caused the can to rattle and bounce all over the place. Then you were really underway. It was foolhardy and dangerous, but, very effective. With the broncs stretched out loping with their tummies almost on the ground trying to get away from the awful racket that the can was making, and your saddle horse showing them how it was really done, right on their heels, you were soon back on your home range. I well remember one instance when my saddle horse got the jump on the bunch and split it right down the middle, and even though the horses were off to both sides of us they didn't change direction, and soon after as we neared our own range, we came roaring over the hill almost sixty horses abreast. How did we stop? Simple. Just slipped the lariat off the horn. No more racket, no more run. Then we rode back and untied our rope off of the silent can.

I guess there's no sentiment here, but many a good can gave its life for a good cause.

**1922**

## The Mirage North of the Red Deer River

In the winter of "'22," along about February, during a warm spell of weather, a mirage materialized "north" of the ranch, which was, very unusual. It could be seen from the ranch and was of the area of the Red Deer River some sixty miles away and the breaks that lead up to the higher land beyond. It was like a portrait of a winter scene that slipped away into nothingness on either side. It was of the river, the river breaks, fences, a cattle shelter, a shack and a rider and his dog. Then as mysteriously as it had come it stole away.

**1922**

## Fred Neubauer Over the Horse and Into the Summerfallow

Fred and Jake Neubauer were brothers about eighteen months apart. They were great pals, and of course, a friendly rivalry developed between them. They each owned a saddle horse and so several kinds of races developed. The rules for this particular race were: Standing on the ground, they were to mount their bare-back

horses, race to the end of the field and back and dismount in exactly the same place they had mounted. Fred had advantages in strength and weight, but that was a disadvantage when mounting a bare-back horse. So he figured to compensate for that by setting his horse a little way down the hill and taking a run and jump for it. The idea was alright but his calculations were a little off; he ran too fast and jumped too high, and in his enthusiasm jumped right over his horse except for catching his feet on its back which turned him upside down and he dove into the plowed field which luckily was only a few feet beyond the horse. And by the time he had dug the dirt out of his neck, hair and ears, the race was half over. He lost that one.

**1922**

## Old Buster the Scoundrel

I had spent the day in the small town of Walsh, Alberta which was about seven miles from home. Buster, my brother's saddle horse which I was using, had grazed and dozed all day on the outskirts of town. Came time to go home — I had about the sickest horse I have ever seen. Later when I had become a bit of a vet, he wouldn't have gotten away with it. But he groaned and sighed and appeared to be in awful pain; it looked as though he wouldn't make it 'til night. I was afraid we wouldn't even make it home. Every time I got into the saddle he became even worse, even lying down to prove his point. So I coaxed and pulled and tugged. In fact, I walked all the way home pulling on the reins to the extent of supplying about half of the motive power to get him there. Finally we made it. My brother was standing in the yard and I said, "Your horse is sick; I could hardly get him home, and I'm afraid we're going to lose him." He smiled and said, "Take your saddle and bridle off and turn him loose." I did. He came to life like a nine to five worker at five o'clock. He bucked and squealed like a two year old colt and galloped off into the hills. Horace laughed — "it figures — he's pulled that on me a couple of times. I find that an offer of a good swift kick in the right place is just the antidote to make him the friskiest horse in all creation."

**1923**

## Old Turkey Track

In the 1920's, my brother Horace worked for "Mac" (J. D. MacDonald) on their ranch north-east of Walsh. I often rode for "Mac" as an extra hand at roundup time etc. I well remember one of my string of saddle horses was an old outlaw

from the Old 76 ranch, (branded, ⅄ , 'turkey track'). He was supposed to have been uncomplicated from his former bad habits, but if you didn't start out in the morning and do the first things first, and there after in their right sequence, when you climbed into the saddle all heck broke loose.

Whether or not that uncomplicated **me**, I don't know, but I do know my thoughts were all centred around one thing; "staying aboard."

The ritual for the morning was: first, at about five o'clock A.M., put the saddle on very **gently** and pull the cincha just tight enough to just touch his tummy, then lead him out to water. Back to the barn for his hay and oats. Then a little more on the cincha. After breakfast, before leading him outside to start the day, I really pulled the cincha tight. It's a lot easier to stay in the saddle if it isn't sliding around on the horse's back. The last procedure was to quietly climb aboard, and if things didn't start to happen in the next three seconds, you were all set for the day.

He was named "Turkey Track" as you have probably expected. But at times, that name was elaborated on considerably including a bit of history concerning his parentage and the remaining expectancy of his life span. But all in all, Old Turkey Track was a darn good saddle horse, and when his time came, I think he must have gone straight to horse heaven, 'cause he was too danged' ornery to be accepted anywhere else.

**1923**

## Threshing on the "Bench" east of the Cypress Hills

In the fall of 1923, as a young man, the same as many others, I went harvesting and threshing.

First to the Tompkins area where along with three others (one who became a life long friend) I was hired to work on a threshing

Threshing on the bench east of the Cypress Hills in Saskatchewan.

machine. I can't remember what the complaint was, but we all walked off the job and made our way to Tompkins afoot. The one who became my friend, and I, had gotten train tickets to Gull Lake. The other two were as it turned out, just bums. They were going to catch a ride on the freight train, so we thought we'd try the same just for the experience. As we lay on the railway grade waiting for a freight, the town hall bell at Tompkins rang, telling everyone for miles around that it was noon. I remember it awakened one bum and his comment was, "That says it's dinner time to most folks but just twelve o'clock to me;" rolled over and promptly went back to sleep. Finally a freight train came but travelling too fast to board. So my new friend and I waited for the passenger train and then went to Gull Lake. We never saw the other two again.

The next day we were hired and taken forty miles or more across country to the area north of Scotsguard and Climax, stopping at the Swift Current Creek en route to water and feed the horses and to have lunch. It was a lovely day, and for us, more like a picnic than anything else. We arrived at our destination quite late, had supper and bedded down for the night.

The engineer and I worked a few days on the threshing machine to get it ready for the fall's run. The others did odd jobs around the place to pay for their board. We were one man short, so when a not too promising specimen walked in, he was hired. He had no bedding, so the engineer let him bunk with him — but only for one night — he was equipped with a full compliment of lice so big that to hear Ed Donahue tell it, his wife, after washing his underwear had to pick the skeletons out of the seams before he could wear it again.

In Saskatchewan at that time there was a law that if a man started work on a farm, he must be paid one half day's wages. I knew men who set up one stook in the morning and then slept behind that stook 'til noon, collected half a day's wages and of course, were fired. One man I met bragged that he had never set up more than one stook a day all fall. The procedure of these parasites was to walk into a farm in late afternoon, say they had just finished their last job (which was so right) and were looking for work. Help was scarce so they were hired. They were given supper, a night's lodgings, and breakfast. Then to the field, one stook, a morning's snooze, a half-day's pay and then kicked off the place. They missed dinner, but they made up for that at supper and breakfast.

Anyway, they weren't overworking themselves so dinner wasn't too important.

We had a rainy spell and were bunking in a bachelor's shack who had been burning old cedar fence posts, and had put double window screen over the top of the chimney to help keep sparks from flying out and setting a prairie fire. Three of the boys had gone to town and came back about two-thirty A.M. This awakened us. We all felt pretty groggy, so one fellow though wobbly, made it to the door and then fell out into the night. The others did the same. The fellows who had been to town said, "Those guys are drunk, wonder where they got the liquor?" I knew they hadn't been drinking so suspected what was wrong. Me, too, feeling as if I needed fresh air carefully made my way to the door. When fresh air hit me, I too folded up, but being prepared I didn't tumble out into the night, but collapsed on the doorstep. The boss said, "That guy doesn't drink, there's something else wrong. We found it — the wet coal we were burning, because of excessive smoke had plugged the double screen, and we were gassed. We removed the screen and things were O.K. from then on except for the five days it took to get us back on our feet.

By this time we had replaced the guy with the lice that had big skeletons, by a big Swede. He was an ideal man, but had one fault which we were to find out about later.

It was a cold wet fall and the old engine was hard to start, so on the coldest mornings we used starting ether (denatured alcohol) to start the old four cylinder Titen. We'd get a can, use about one third of it for one start and put what was left back in the tractor tool box. There would be at least enough for two more starts. In the mornings when we went to get our ether it was gone. The engineer asked me, "What did you do with the ether?" I said, "I was just going to ask you that same question." This went on for quite some time before deciding to do something about it. I hid behind the strawstack and the engineer in the oil wagon (fuel supply wagon) and sure enough, as we suspected that big Swede took the ether out of the tool box, sneaked around behind the strawstack and drank the stuff. Holy cow! What a stomach! After that we bought a lock and kept it under lock and key. Part of the reason for the above and similar antics about that time was prohibition.

We had one intriguing fellow on the crew, and it was impossible to find anything out about him. He didn't seem to have any past except that he came from England. He landed in our midst as mysteriously and suddenly as if he had dropped out of the sky. We

turned around and there he was. He was a good worker, and willing to learn, and learned very quickly. But his personal habits were what really intrigued us. He had false teeth which he never removed, hadn't done for years. They must have practically grown to his gums. He was very particular about cleanliness. He brushed his teeth two or three times a day in just the same way anyone would who didn't have dentures. Every morning he washed and shaved, put on a white shirt (changing when they were the least bit soiled), put on a collar and tie, then an expensive dress suit and polished his shoes and was never seen without his jacket on regardless of how hot the weather was or how hard he worked. Poor guy, his hands being soft, became very sore; they were raw and torn almost as though they had been through a meat grinder. But in spite of all that he kept his end up without so much as a complaint. He never spoke unless necessary but was always whistling, and that, along with many other things he did very well.

Strange. I'm still wondering what made the fellow tick.

**The Land of Wheat**

Another incident on "The Bench" south and east of Gull Lake, and east of the Cypress Hills. (The land of wheat, wheat and more wheat.) One year they threshed fifteen bushels per acre and they called it a crop failure. In 1923, stubbled-in wheat was running fifty-five bushels per acre. The stooks stood so thick it was difficult to drive between them.

The land is so flat you can almost see forever, and there were stooks as far as you could see. One morning standing on the separator I counted forty-five other threshing machines blowing straw into the air. Some of those in the distance seemed to be just dots surrounded by dust.

We always sent the bundle teams to the far end of the field we were starting to thresh. But one morning, being no fences, the boys loaded up in the next farmer's field before we caught it. Now how do you correct a mistake like that? (Some of the sheaves were already threshed.) Easy. Wherever there has been a stook in the field, it leaves a spot which can be easily seen. So we threshed ten more complete stooks out of the same field, noted the bushels threshed, averaged it per stook, counted the number of spots left by the first stooks removed, multiplied the two figures together and paid the farmer for that many bushels of wheat.

About 1924

## Mr. Abercrombie's Mud Hole

In the semi-depression years of the 1920's, the Trans-Canada highway just wasn't: There was a spot or two of grade at bases of hills and through some coulees, and odd culverts here and there. The rest of the way, our now famous Trans-Canada just wandered westward through mud and sand holes. It ran for miles through the famous Walsh gumbo flats, and on those flats were spots that formed real mud-holes after every rain, and at that time, cars, just becoming prevalent on that "highway," invariably got stuck in every one of them. But there was one mud-hole in particular on that "highway" that caused a lot of trouble, but Mr. Abercrombie (not his real name) an old friend of ours was always on hand with a team of horses to pull unfortunate motorists through at a reasonable price; about a dollar and a half per pull.

There was one thing we never could figure out. Some summers were dry, so dry that hardly anything grew, yet that mud-hole still persisted. Some people suggested jokingly that maybe at times a few barrels of water somehow strayed into it during the night. Never-the-less, it was a real problem and would have been much worse if it hadn't been for our friend and his team. In places, in very dry weather, you could turn out and drive around the spots, but in some places it was down the road or not at all, like when the creek was too deep, or ditches or fences on both sides. Abercrombie's mud-hole as we called it, happened to be one of those.

1924

## You Entertain the Cow

In the summer of 1924, I worked for Dan Drinnan north of Walsh. That year when we gathered the cattle for branding, one half-scrawny cow with a calf, went on the prod (fight). She would have only been in the way and also dangerous to boot, had she been in the corral while branding. So we turned her and her calf into the hay field to cool off and to be attended to later. The day after branding, Dan told me to go see if I could get that cow and calf into the corral, and we'd brand the calf. I got them into the corral without too much trouble although she was still pretty much stirred up. Dan said, "Now you catch the calf and we'll brand it." So I built me a loop, climbed down into the corral and was proceeding to rope the calf, but didn't get very far. Old boss with her horns aimed at the seat of my pants, was figuratively breathing down the back of my neck. With her at my heels I took off for the

nearest place I could get to that might provide a little protection; the snubbing post, in the middle of the corral, used in halter breaking horse, was just the place. So with my hands on top of the post and her horns, one each side of it, we hopped and bobbed around it like two boys playing tag around a barrel. Dan, with an ear to ear grin on his face watched us for awhile, then decided it was a good time to catch the calf. So said, "That's it, you entertain the cow while I catch the calf." So saying, he jumped down into the corral from the top rail from where he had been enjoying the situation, turned his back on the cow, built a loop and swung his rope to catch the calf. But something went wrong. I think the cow backed up to get a better run at me and his rope caught in her tail. And him knowing what would happen, made a dash for the corral fence without even looking back. He only made it far enough up to get his elbows over the top rail, leaving his legs dangling down in the danger zone. Then looking over his shoulder, when the cow's head went out of sight behind him he spread his legs, and old boss clobbered the corral rails right between his knees. Then I said to him, "now you entertain the cow for awhile." But when the novelty had worn off, I put a stop to it by throwing my rope to hit her on the tail to divert her attention. I did, and I was under way by the time she turned around, and with a thirty foot head start (the length of my rope) and urged on by a sense of self-preservation I easily made it to the safety of the top rail. From the corner of the corral was a heavy plank door leading into an eighteen-by-eighteen foot barn built of heavy logs with a high deep manger built with heavy planks where we could hide if the things got too hot. There were also two clap doors at the back which we could use as escape hatches. The big door was hung in such a way that if anything entered and you were inside, before the animal could turn around you could step out and close the door. Well, Dan stood just inside the door and said, "so bossy, so bossy" several times. That seemed to get her attention, but when he moved just inside the door and waved a stick at her, that really got her goat. She was at the other end of the corral, and with a loud bellow and her tail lashing the breeze, let out for him in the doorway at top speed. He stepped aside — she went past him a sizzling — he stepped out and closed the door. She went three times around the inside of that barn bouncing off the sides like a pool ball off the cushions before getting stopped. We branded the calf, and then let her out. Still intent on murder, she attacked the first thing she saw — the gate post — bashed into it at full speed and knocked herself out. She

finally came to, and while she was still groggy, we manouvered her back out onto the open range and then went to supper.

1925

## The Denis Brothers and the Plauhaup Ranch

I knew four of the boys who often worked together. Many summers they put up hay for "Plauhaup" (that may not be the correct spelling but everybody called them "Flewhop") on the ranch next to the place where I sometimes helped out. They were great workers, and really got things done as each one of them must have been as strong as four or five ordinary men.

During the time of "the gas well" (they were actually drilling for oil) near Gaskells at Many Island Lakes north of Walsh, Alberta, Rubin Denis was hauling well casing for the well, and when loading at Walsh, he got four men to help him load. He said, "You fellows lift at that end and I'll lift at this." So saying, he picked up his end of the casing and said,"Come on you guys, lift!" With a little more encouraging they got their end up too, and so for the rest of the load.

Another instance: In Irvine, Alberta, the boys had loaded a wagon with two and a half tons of coal, then remembered that the wagon needed greasing. So one of them said to one of his brothers, "Go get a tin of axle grease from the store and we'll grease this wagon." The grease procured, the first brother lay on his back under the wagon, put his feet up against the axle, and with his legs, lifted the axles one at a time, front then rear while the other boys greased them. The boys greasing the wagon took a little more time than he thought they should, so he said, "Hurry up you guys, this wagon is getting heavy. Get those two wheels back on."

At another time, one of the horses in one of the Denis teams was misbehaving to the extent that it aggravated its driver considerably, so much so, that without further ado, he grabbed it by the ears, jerked it off its front feet and threw it to the ground, it landing on its side. It was so startled, that by the time it had gotten to its feet again, it had completely forgotten why it had been misbehaving in the first place.

I'm sorry, but over the years I've forgotten their names, but working on the Plauhaup ranch at that time, was the only girl bronc driver I ever knew. She was in every sense a first class bronco buster. . . .

I've known girls to break horses to the saddle, but she drove 'em rode 'em and what have you. Her, and the young man she was

engaged to and later married, worked together. He would halter break and drive them on the wagon a time or two, then help her to hitch them to a farm implement, usually a cultivator; four broncs at a time, and away she went. I remember they tied the broncos' tails together so they couldn't turn sideways. Not being able to go sideways, and a cultivator won't back up, there was only one way to go. Straight ahead. And if things got going too fast, setting the cultivator to dig two or three inches deeper sure slowed things up. Luckily there were no stones in that area. And ride — she could ride anything a saddle could stay on.

The Plauhaups had a boy who in 1925 couldn't have been more than eight years old. What a character! His dad told me that he had always figured himself the "best" or "worst" cusser in the country, but I heard that young son of mine tear loose one day and cussed for it seemed like three or four minutes without so much as repeating himself once. Even I — Mr. Plauhaup — had to admit that it was awful. I said, "Mr. Plauhaup, he learned it all from you." He said, "Yes, and twice as much more from the hired hands." "They get a kick out of hearing him, and add as much as they can to his already colorful vocabulary. He has put it all together and came up with a vocabulary of profanity and obscenity that is out of this world. I just have to admit that I am now relegated to second place."

Being the Plauhaup ranch also ran sheep, they kept several hounds strictly for keeping the coyotes away from the flocks.

One morning, staying at a safe distance, the hounds herded a skunk into a fairly large culvert, and there, they stopped. The boy sicked them on and tried to get them to go into the culvert and do battle. But no sir — they knew lots better than that. This exasperated him to the extent that he simply crawled into the culvert himself, grabbed the skunk by the tail and hauled him out. Still holding it by the tail, he encouraged the so and so hounds to come and finish this and that kind of job, but with no success. Right thereafter, they heard that they were of such and such parentage plus a lot of, until then, their never before heard of history. Even the hounds didn't like what they heard. As he held the skunk up by the tail, one of the men shot it with a rifle. You can appreciate the fact that the boy wasn't very popular for awhile.

Soon afterwards, the family moved away and the boy started going to school; I heard the teachers had quite a time of it — I'll bet they did!

## Old Time Get-togethers

The citizens of Clover Hill S.D. (Irvine, Alta) often had the problem of too many people and not enough room. Such a large crowd attended one of the dances that it became impossible to accommodate everyone inside the building. The windows were opened as wide as possible to permit some of the music and light to filter to the outside so that the overflow throng could dance on a level stretch of ground beside the school. The novelty of the situation motivated more than one dancer to desert the swarm inside and join the swinging and swaying outdoors. The young people in particular were glad to take advantage of the romantic environs that the emergency situation created.

If the babies or the small children became sleepy during the course of the evening they were bundled into a coat or blanket and deposited without ceremony on the benches or desks arrayed along the sides of the room. . . .

Entire families including the dogs, used to attend the meetings in the Clover Hill S.D. (Irvine, Alta). The event was more like a community outing than a serious business session. While the settlers were settling their differences on the inside, the dogs and children were doing likewise on the outside. Every so often, some adult, perturbed by the noise, left the meeting to hush the youngsters in the cloakroom, or to suppress a fight among the yelping dogs in the schoolyard. Things calmed down for a while but soon burst out with renewed virgor. Someone else then took his turn at playing policeman.

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1926

## Pauly Paulson Sharpening Fence Posts

Pauly Paulson, (Pauly) mentioned elsewhere in this narrative, worked for Mr. George Mackie on the 25 Ranch west of Nanton, Alberta in the years centering on 1926. He was an early riser and a good worker, but very set in his ways. You could no more change Pauly than you could the time of day.

The land was rocky and fence posts to be driven had to have a short point, or else they would break when driven. Pauly was sharpening posts "short." Mr. Mackie thought they should be "long" points. After several attempts to get it over to Pauly failed, he sharpened a post a good half of its length, showed it to Pauly and

said: "That's the way I want them sharpened." (He really didn't want them done that way but knew he'd really have to overdo it, to get even a small part of his instructions over to Pauly.) Pauly's only reply was, "Mr. Mackie, I think I hit you over the head with a fence post." Mackie gave up, and Pauly went quietly about his business of making "short" points, which actually were the only kind that could be driven where Pauly was going to use them.

**More About Pauly**

Six days a week he got up at five o'clock each week day morning, made coffee and gave Mr. and Mrs. Mackie their's in bed. Then went out and did all the chores before breakfast. By six-thirty or seven o'clock everyone was ready to take on the day. But not later than four A.M. on Sunday morning, Pauly was up, did the chores but didn't make breakfast, instead, washed, shaved and dressed up in his Sunday best. Then lay on his bed reading or just lying until breakfast was ready. When asked how come, his answer was: "If I can get up six days a week at five o'clock for Mr. Mackie, I can get up one day a week at four o'clock for Pauly." The last I heard of him, he married a widow who had seven children and lived happily ever after.

**1926**

## The Horse-Cow Mystery

In the spring of '26, before moving horses east for the Cooper Ranch, I worked on the ranch riding and breaking horses.

Joe Baker did the cooking while I attended to our saddle horses which we kept in the barn. Had we, for any reason lost our saddle horse (we kept one on hand at all times) and left afoot, it would have been impossible for us to catch a horse in that wild bunch, and us, six miles from town. Not so good. So when I took care of the saddle horse for the night, I tied him to the manger with a thick rope around his neck and threaded it through the halter ring, tying both ends with a bowline knot. Secondly, I tied a pole across the back of the stall so if by a miracle he got loose from the manger, we still had him. To be three times sure, I was extra careful when fastening the barn door. And then we went to bed.

Next morning Joe started breakfast and I went out to attend to Dobbin. All was just as I had left it the night before, rope, knots, pole and door, except for one thing. Instead of our saddle horse, there was, munching contentedly away at the manger, an old quiet long horned cow. I thought it funny, so I called to Joe to come and take a look-see. He took one look, and, "Wow"! I knew that when

he thought it appropriate he could call into use a really colorful vocabulary. But that morning, he called on a reserve I didn't know he had. Figuratively speaking, it was actually psychedelic.

Under ordinary circumstances, Joe's language was very proper, and at no time was it ever obscene, but when the occasion warranted it, he could sure do it justice without calling on obscenity. Right here I might add that he was one of the best guys I ever worked for or with.

Around about half past ten that morning, a couple of riders from a neighbouring ranch rode in looking for horses, and after hearing our tale of woe, offered to run our saddle horses into the corral for us. The field where we were was completely fenced, and there was no possible chance of strays getting in. Those boys knew that as well as we did, but had come **back** purposely just to run in our saddle horses.

We were willing to eat a little "crow" (as it were) to get our mounts back. But are sure, they roped that cow out on the range somewhere, hauled her in and made the switch. Anyway you look at it the joke was on us. Oh well, you can't win 'em all.

As before mentioned, I worked for Joe Baker — foreman on the Cooper Ranch — we broke horses and then trailed them east and sold them as we went along.

By this time, my brother Horace and I, when riding, had started packing lunches along with a sealer of hot tea or coffee wrapped in a woolen sweater to keep it hot, and then tied it behind the saddle. We were the first riders to do that. It used to be considered sissy to have lunch on the trail, but we said, "to heck with that noise." After we broke the ice it soon caught on and became general practice. Today, lunch is delivered to the riders by car or truck.

Before the days of no lunches while on the trail or roundups, chuck wagons followed or rather went ahead of the riders and stopped in a convenient place where the cowboys could ride in for meals. Now, in the days of fences, cars and trucks have taken over a lot of work from the saddle horse except for working of the cattle. The saddle horses even ride in trucks to and from their work if it happens to be some distance from the ranch. But the riders now are generally close enough to the ranch headquarters to ride in for meals. If not, meals are taken to them.

On the trail east that spring with a bunch of horses, Joe thought I'd fallen out of my tree when I said, "Let's find some place out of the cold wind and have dinner." He said, "Dinner is

many hours ride from here in any direction, you have some how got your marbles mixed." But as we rounded a bend in the trail, we rode into a quiet spot on the leeward side of a hill, and a few rods away, still out of the wind was a slough fringed with thick green grass. I said, "this is just the spot, those horses will spend a good hour in that slough if we'll let them." So saying, I untied my pack from behind the saddle and shook out a lunch and tea for two. Joe with a guilty conscience looked furtively about to make sure he wasn't being watched. Then the sense of self-preservation overtook him, and swearing me to secrecy, joined me in a mid-day meal out on the open prairie miles from anywhere. Afterwards, sustained by sandwiches and warmed by hot tea, he lay out on the grass and relaxed. Then said, "That secrecy deal is off. And you tell all those other dumb cowboys they're missing the boat for sure. This here's got trying to fill your stomach with tobacco smoke and fresh air beat all to heck." So the custom grew.

**1927**

## A Ghost in the Snow

Early one morning in the spring of 1927, I was making my way through blizzarding 30 below weather, and as I plowed through the foot of snow that lay on the ground as I hurried to catch the train at the Medicine Hat station, I didn't believe what I saw, for through the haze of whirling snow a bare footed ghost like figure, clothed only in a short white gown fleeted past me at a dog trot going in the opposite direction. I shook my head in disbelief. I wasn't drunk as I don't drink, but it had to be so as the apparent phantom passed me within three feet.

I never told anyone because I was certain no one would believe me. But thirty years later, Andrew Lambie was helping us out on the ranch. And one night he said, "I haven't said anything about this for thirty years, but I've just got to tell somebody and it might as well be you and Ida. I don't expect you to believe me, but I know you won't laugh at me."

He related the exact experience that I had had, except in a different location. My reply. "I saw the same thing, but never mentioned it for the same reasons you didn't." We were both relieved and felt that our doubtful sanity had at least been partially restored. We both knew what had happened, but didn't know the other had had the same experience, so had kept the whole thing to ourselves.

The answer: We both knew the man, but didn't recognize him

at the time. It seems he was scheduled for an operation at 10:00 A.M. At 6:30 A.M. he hopped out of bed, jumped out through the hospital window and ran the mile through the snow and cold to his home, clothed only in his hospital gown.

**1928**

## The Accidental Gathering of Intelligentsia

In the fall of 1928, we bought a complete threshing machine, (engine and separator). Of course we had to have a crew. The farmers we threshed for supplied the grain haulers and some teams and bundle racks. We were to supply the rest, which included all the teamsters for the bundle racks (collectively they were often called stook teams).

So we started to gather a threshing crew. We picked these up wherever we could. Mostly men travelling around looking for harvest jobs. By luck or fate, that crew turned out to be the most literate crew we've ever had. We started with a metallurgist and professional blacksmith, next came an expert smelter man from the Trail smelter who I understand later became superintendent, a mining engineer, an ordained minister, a locomotive engineer who incidently at one time drove the flyer from London to Edinburough. It seems to me it could have been the world famous "Flying Scotsman". I asked him what the countryside along the railway looked like. He said, "I don't know, I never saw it. Travelling at the speed we travelled at, everything within a half mile was just a blur, and beyond that not very clear." My memory of the next two isn't completely clear, but it seems as though one was a draftsman and the other a steam engineer. Last but not least, a mechanical engineer and fitter and master mechanic.

Some were out for their health, some getting experience and to know a new land. Others were just out seeing the country and having a working holiday. With the minister, who was from the U.S.A., it had something to do with his forth-coming pension. He preached so many months and then went out and worked for so many months.

We had a big army tent that we moved from place to place, which the men used as sleeping quarters. When it rained (that fall it rained a lot) there were discussions, arguments, quiz sessions and what have you. A discussion would be started on a subject and the one whose line of work it was on, would be on one side and the rest on the other. But never once was there a heated temper or an unkind word spoken. To listen to those guys was a real education.

As for humour, there was no end of it. When they had all gone after threshing was finished, there was a big void left in their wake.

After leaving, some of the men wrote to us for years afterwards.

**1928**

## The Veterinarian Who Had a Sense of Humour

This concerns a veterinarian and a mystery that the "cop" (used affectionately in this case) never solved. Years ago in our town of Irvine, Alberta we had the calmest, coolest, most collected mountie that probably ever lived. He was smart too, but the solution to the mystery forever eluded him.

One night, a comparative stranger got oiled up in the bar to the extent that he was causing trouble. The mountie had to go to Medicine Hat, Alberta for some reason, so before midnight, he locked the drunk in the clink, put the key in his pocket and left expecting to get back about three A.M. The Vet., "Dr. Dawson", whether college trained or not I don't know, but with working with him years later, I found him to be a really good veterinarian. But he had, will we say, other followings. One being lock picking.

He had intended going to Mexico in the near future but changed his plans. He went to the jail, picked the lock, let the drunk out and relocked the cell. The man by this time was sober enough to do as he was told but still pretty well clobbered. So the Vet told him to walk up and down the street 'til the mountie returned, told him what to say, and then took off for Mexico. When the officer found him walking on the street and the cell still locked, he asked the man, how come you're out and why? He repeated what Dr. Dawson had told him to say. "You didn't leave me any night accommodation, and when you got-a-go — you got-a-go." And that's all he would say.

A few years later, I was working for the doctor's friend at Turin, Alberta when he returned from Mexico. He was not only a good vet, but knew how to really handle stock. Because someone pulled a boo-boo, I could have been killed, but his quick thinking and quick action took instant control of the situation.

**1929**

## A Fascinating Contraption

As we get older, there seems to be less time and space to move ahead into. But there is all kinds of room back there in the past where we just came from. Memories that have been forgotten for

years seem to turn up now and then from out of that haze where people, things and fascinations have laid buried for years.

Back in 1929, I was quite taken with a Fish & Chip Shoppe in Calgary where our family almost inevitably stopped to alleviate our pangs of hunger whenever passing that way. It was a fascinating place, especially the contraption they used to convey orders and soiled dishes back and forth. That should actually read meals forth and soiled dishes back between the kitchen and the dining area. It was an ingenious device that worked on the up and down principle.

There were two vertical rods in the kitchen about two feet apart that ran from the counter top that was between the kitchen and the dining area, to the kitchen ceiling, and two corresponding rods in the dining area that ran from a table in the dining area to the ceiling. There was a sliding mechanism on each of the four rods that would slide up and down and would stay in any position. Each sliding part in the kitchen was joined to its corresponding sliding part in the dining area by a light thirty foot cable that miraculously stayed taut at all times, but the real mystery, was that when one end of either of the two contrivances went up, the other end came down and vice-versa.

A tray or kind of metal basket was hung on each cable with a free running pulley. When your order of fish and chips was ready, the cook, if the tray was at his end of the cable and of course down, would place your order on the tray and lift his end of the contraption up or, leave it for the waitress to pull her end down. In either case, your order took off for the dining area with gravity doing its stuff. The soiled dishes were returned to the kitchen by reversing the procedure, and of course the trays could be brought to either end of the cable by simply pulling that end down.

When business was brisk, those two trays zipped back and forth like flying saucers and were about the busiest and most willing chore boys I have ever seen.

**Late 1920's through the 1930's**

## Honesty, the Long Lost Art

Honesty was rampant in those days as the following proves: There were many roadside milk stands along the roads in British Columbia where tourists could pick up fresh milk. The stands were in a shady place, but since refrigeration was not available, the milk was changed about every two hours depending on how hot the day was. After a couple of hours on the stand, the milk was put

back into a cold stream or spring to cool, and a cool supply taken out and put on the stand.

There was no attendant, just the bottles of milk and an open change box with some small change in it to start the day. You took your milk, made the correct change and left any empty milk bottles you had. (I suppose there were people who took along on their trips a couple of empties or so from home for exchange purposes.) Although a day's travel then, wasn't very far compared to a day's travel now, and even though travel was usually short trips of a few days' duration, it was still amazing how the milk bottles stayed within the distance of a few hundred miles as they travelled back and forth all summer.

I asked one farmer if he had ever lost any money or bottles on the deal. His answer was, "Nope, I've sometimes had too much money because when people couldn't make the correct change, they would leave the nearest amount they could over the price of the milk they had taken. (And incidently, the price of milk at that time was ten cents per quart.) And I end up within one or two bottles more or less than I start the season with."

*Where There's a Will There's a Way*

In the days when roads were still little more than mountain trails, or no roads at all, there was always some way of getting things to where they were to go. In this case, milk. One day when my wife Ida and I were travelling through the mountains, we heard a clanking on the nearby railway. In a few moments, around the bend came a young fellow on a hand car loaded with cans of milk. This surprised us somewhat, and as we watched, he pumped his precious load past us and down the track at about fifteen miles per hour, evidently on his way to some hard to get to place.

**1929 through the early 30's**

## I Don't Know Where I'm Going But I Know I'm On My Way

In the late 1920's, Henry Wolfe homesteaded some two miles southeast of our ranch. There was a fair crop in '29 but on newly worked land it wasn't very profitable. He and his wife worked hard for a number of years, but it was during the drought years of the 1930's and trying to establish themselves and make a go of it was virtually impossible under the circumstances. One year after another — nothing; hardly feed for the few stock they had. So the time came when they could hang on no more, and with sad hearts and bitter disappointment they closed the door of their little home

for the last time. With shattered dreams and almost empty handed, they drove away taking with them the few things they had left that they could call their own. They drove out across the prairie not knowing for where they were bound. I was riding, and I remember meeting Henry as his last team pulled a hay rack containing the last of their possessions along the winding prairie trail. He stopped and spoke to me. He was a jolly man, and even in the face of adversity as we passed the time of day he did not complain. His last words as he drove away will always remain with me. They give a little insight into his philosophy of life. They were: "Well, good-bye Tom, I don't know where I'm going, but I know I'm on my way."

It's strange how fate seemed to take over. They drove back to the town of Irvine, Alberta that had more or less been their home in the past. They later tried farming again, then moved back to Irvine and stayed; went into the poolroom and soft drink business, were quite successful, and lived active and useful lives from then on.

**1929**

## Throttles and Shovels Wide Open

In 1929, trucks were coming into use for grain hauling, taking over some of the hauling normally done by team and grain wagon. Other than loading from the grain spout of the threshing machine, and unloading by dump hoist in the grain elevator, practically all handling of grain was done by the "armstrong method", meaning it was shovelled by hand. Of necessity our best grain haulers were men with strong backs and weak minds (and I'm almost convinced of that literally).

During those years, Herman Teige had a Durant truck that held sixty-five to seventy bushels. Bill Appleyard had a Dodge truck that held eighty-six to ninety bushels of wheat, which at that time was a lot. Bill Appleyard and I were hauling wheat from one of our farms. Herman Teige and August Johnson were hauling from Johnson's a mile farther up the road from town. Of course a good natured competition ensued. They had farther to haul but we had a larger truck to fill, so circumstances were fairly even load for load wise. There was a big hill between town and the places from where we were hauling, so we couldn't see what the other outfit was doing when on the opposite sides of the hill. We passed a few times on top of the hill going in opposite directions and I mean "going". Herman was, although a young man, an old motorcycle racer, and Bill, the wildest truck driver I ever knew. Bill and I held

our own for awhile. Then they caught up to us and followed us into town. Bill and I really turned on the heat the next load and put it on in record time, determined to pull ahead in the race. But as we pulled into the elevator with it, they pulled out ahead of us and were on their way for another load. So we had lost or so we thought, but this brought us on the same side of the hill at the same time. What they had done to gain an advantage was switch to another granary one and a quarter miles closer to town than from where we were hauling from, and with their truck being smaller than ours we had no chance of staying with them load for load. On our way back we passed close by where they were loading and at the rate at which they were shovelling wheat, under even circumstances, they would still have been formidable competition. But our disadvantage was such that Bill said, "The heck to that noise", and we went back to hauling grain at a normal speed.

**1929**

## Prairie Fires

In the days of threshing crews, less summerfallow and fewer graded roads, in the falls of the years there were many prairie fires started in a dozen different ways, but there was only one thing to do: put them out before much damage was done. When one was sighted, all threshing crews for miles around shut down and went to fight the fire. The ideal things usually close at hand, were old gunny sacks soaked in water which someone would haul in a barrel or cream cans in a wagon, truck or car. A cowhide with a weight on it dragged by two ropes between two riders straddling the fire is very effective, but seldom available. So all means of fire fighting were used: shovels, forks, sacks and old coats, and in one instance, one lady took off her good fur coat and fought the fire with it. It was put it out or untold damage was done.

**1929**

## His First Gas Customer at Red Deer

In the fall of 1929, Mom, Dad, my sister Ethel and I made a trip into south central Alberta. As we drove into Red Deer, (then just a big town), I noticed that our gas supply was low. At the foot of the hill was a brand new gas station just opened for business, so we stopped and filled up. On leaving, the owner said, "You are my first customer; hope to see you back some day." Thirty years later I filled again at the same gas station. The same fellow with thirty more years behind him was still there.

He looked at me and said, "Somewhere back there you ring a bell. I wonder why?" Then I asked, "Do you remember your first customer?" "Hey, you're . . .!" "That's right . . . I'm him."

**About 1930**

## Andy Lambie Gave Ethel A Lamb

That spring, Andrew Lambie gave my sister Ethel a lamb, and it grew up to be my water-loo. The darn thing was always causing me trouble; coming in doors when I was going out; coming out when I was going in. But one of his favorite tricks was standing in front of me when I was carrying something that prevented me from seeing him, and down I would go. I tried to fall on him but no such luck. He would stay 'til I was tilted past the point of no return, then was gone like a shot, and whatever I was carrying and me would crash in a heap where he had just been. He could have gotten into serious trouble if I could have caught him. But he had an ally which he made sure was handy before pulling one of his tricks; a great big hereford bull. When things got too hot for him like when I was breathing down the back of his neck with murder on my mind, he'd head for his old pal the bull. He'd dive under him, then turn around and watch me by looking under his friend. No matter what I tried, he always kept the bull between us. The bull refused to budge an inch, just stood there (with I'm sure a grin on his big fat face) and took it all in.

In the stable one morning I was just taking a set of harness off the peg when I purposely looked down. He was there alright. So, instead of lifting the harness off the peg I grabbed him. Now that I had him, what to do to the little so-and-so. Poor little guy. He just wasn't big enough to have all those things done to him; and besides, he was looking over his shoulder with those big pleading eyes saying, "Oh! come on now. You're not that kind of a stick-in-the-mud." So I grabbed him by the scuff of his neck and the seat of his pants and threw him out through the door. He made a four point bouncy landing about twenty feet away. Wow! That was fun; so back he trots and stands in front of me so I could do it again. After a few trips I could see that I wasn't getting to first base. So the next time 'round I grabbed a horse collar and slipped it over his back and around his tummy. That he didn't like. After bucking and tearing around for a few minutes he lost the collar and went over to his friend for consolation, and that was the end of that foolishness.

Another of his favorite pastimes was when the bull was lying down, he would back off about twenty feet, lower his head and

then at full speed would crash into his friend head-on. Just before he hit, the bull would quit chewing his cud, clench his teeth and close his eyes. "Wam" and the little rascle would bounce off like a tennis ball. They would sometimes keep this up for about an hour.

Sheep are not supposed to be coyote proof, but he was. Even in the winter I've often see him two or three miles from home, all alone excpet for one thing — you guessed it — that bull. Anyone or anything attempting to harm that little rascel found himself confronted with nearly a ton of flying fury. But in my case, the bull seemed to think the whole business was kind of funny.

**1931**

## Chautauqua

Before travel and communications were available like they are today, people, long distances from larger centres had little or no opportunity to have contact with culture except of their own making. In the rural areas, the school teachers were the main source for bringing culture to the area. Many of the "school marms" married eligible young farmers and became valuable additions to the district.

But there was one group of people who did much to fill that void educationally, musically and, by putting on good old fashioned vaudeville entertainment. This group were the members of the Chautauqua.

Now the forerunners to the Chautauqua: I guess you could call them the booking agents, whose responsibility was to travel in advance of the show, finding suitable locations, getting financial pledges from the local merchants and others. Also getting committees set up to handle the other details. In other words, doing the groundwork and then moving on with little recognition or appreciation.

It is in this phase that I was one time fortunately and pleasantly involved. I was asked by the agent, a lovely young girl, to be her scout, her driver and companion for three worthwhile and interesting days.

The young lady had a list of prospective merchants etc. as long as a fork handle, which she was to contact. My job was mostly to track down (I mean locate) those people. Then she would approach them concerning financial support for the Chautauqua; they were not to give her cash or cheques but pledges for the amount they felt they could afford. And if I remember rightly, she was 100% successful in her canvassing.

Being assured of enough money to pay its expenses, the Chautauqua moved in on a date arranged on its summer schedule.

At the time, I was staying at my friend's home, and each morning, in a car she had rented, at 9:00 A.M. picked me up and I took over the driving for the day. About 2:30 on the third day we had finished her assignment and she suggested that we drive to a park and laze around for the rest of the afternoon which we did except for a few anxious minutes when a small boy fell off the slide and hurt himself quite badly but not seriously. We were about to take him to the Medical Clinic when his parents turned up and took over from there.

It was a quiet sunny day, she a lovely girl, and our afternoon ended all too soon. About 6:00 she drove me to my friends home; thanked me for helping her and for my company; reluctantly said good-bye and drove off into the summer evening. And even after all these years I often think of her and hope that life has been as good to her as it has been to me.

**Early 1930's**

## The Blackleg Scare

By the early 1930's we hadn't had blackleg on the ranch for more than twenty years and our herd was apparently clean, so had not vaccinated in nearly twenty years. One bright sunny morning I rode out on the range to check the cattle and was horrified to find three calves and two three year old heifers dead from blackleg. That really started a train of action.

Our car, like many others was not being driven due to the economics of the Dirty Thirties, and anyway, I wouldn't have had time to drive to Medicine Hat and back for the vaccine and gather the cattle too. So I galloped off to Walsh Alberta and had the proprietor of **The Ranchers Store** M. S. Shroder (general merchant), phone to Medicine Hat for vaccine to be sent down on the 8:20 evening passenger train. Then I rode back home.

That afternoon the cattle were corralled at the ranch and waiting.

By 8:20 P.M., I had changed to a fresh saddle horse and was waiting at the station when the train pulled in. Mr. Shroder was waiting too. The vaccine was delivered by the Express man to the station agent and by the agent to Mr. Shroder who gave it to me. I then tore off for home as fast as old dobbin could lay hoof to the prairie between town and the ranch. Then my sister (Ethel) and I, in what must have been a record, vaccinated every calf and every

heifer three years old and younger. Those calves and young cows went through that old chute like shells through a machine gun and at ten minutes past twelve that night we were through; wiped our brows and called it a day. There were no more losses, so, the results were well worth the effort.

**1920's and 30's**

## Any Way to Make a Buck

During the dry 20's and the hungry 30's, except for 1927-28 and 29, money was very scarce, and **any way** to make a buck was taken advantage of! There were many horses still running on the open land that had not yet been taken up. These horses usually ran in bunches of 10 or 12 to about 25 head, and were fair game for anyone with a sharp jack-knife or a pair of sheep shears. It was mostly the young fellows that would round up and corral a bunch or two and hack off their tail and mane hair right down to the very horse itself. When those guys got through with those horses there was nothing but the hairless skin covered tail stub at the back end, and the front end was pretty bare too. It sure made you mad when your saddle horse or team of drivers was so unceremoniously denuded. In fact, it was downright embarrassing to ride or drive into town with a horse or team that was so inadequately clothed.

Of course the idea of all this was to get a few dollars, and at that time, horse hair sold for $2.00 a pound. It was braided into lariat ropes, bridles, reins and other necessities of the ranching business by professional craftsmen and others.

In the early days of this century, a lot of grey cotton batting upholstery pads were used, but the pieces of furniture padded with horse hair were the Cadillacs of the furniture trade. Now foam rubber is used.

**From 1900 to 1930's**

## A Little About Horse Stealing

When horses were raised by the hundreds and were practically our sole source of power and transportation, they were worth money. Money breeds evil, so we had horse thieves. Sometimes the most unlikely individual would swipe a horse or two, but some made a regular practice of it. Some individuals in particular, although they had other business interests, they also had an interest in other people's business if it happened to be the horse business.

In later years, one old timer jokingly told the following: You know that horse stealing is in the blood, and if it's in your blood you can't help stealing horses, but I didn't know that everyone

knew about me, but when I went to give blood at the blood donor clinic, they said, "since your blood will be given to others we don't want it — we already have enough horse thieves in the country."

Back in those days when horses were worth a considerable amount of money, brand blotting was sometimes used to change the brand on a stolen horse, but was used more often in the rustling of cattle.

Brand blotting is the art of changing the characters of brands to different characters, or blotching the brand so it can't be read. You could sometimes use a short bar for some altering jobs, but the tool mostly used was a running iron. It is a short, easy to carry, round bar with an eye or ring at one end of the rod. You could use a heavy wagon box rod, but it wasn't the best of equipment. When changing brands, for example, you can change an "F" to an "E"; or a "V" to a "Y"; a "P" to an "R" or a "p" to a sloppy "B" and so on.

A trick we sometimes used to try to catch a horse thief was to place a silver dollar under the skin of an unbranded horse we could recognize, and then turn it loose out on the open range, hoping some thief would pick it up. A few thieves were caught that way, and after that, unbranded horses were pretty well shied away from.

A silver dollar was usually placed somewhere on the side of the horse's neck, quite often just below the mane where it is hardest to detect. This identification could be registered in the brands office, and included location, date of coin and country of issue.

As cars and tractors became prevalent, the importance of old dobbin slowly passed from horses to cattle, and in 1943, hundreds of horses that were of no use to anyone, and still left on the diminishing open range in this area, were rounded up under the supervision of Barney Crocket, special officer and brand inspector for the R.C.M.P., and shipped to a canning factory in Swift Current, Saskatchewan, and canned for the horse meat market in Europe.

Here might be the time to mention that I understand that in my early days of ranching and even before that time, it was illegal to own or have in your possession a running iron, I suppose it still is.

Sure, horses created a few problems, but I don't know what we would have done without old dobbin.

Sure, there were accidents, but is wasn't that often that

anyone got really hurt. Sometimes between you, you created a spectacular that would put a lot of movies to shame, like when you were travelling at full-tilt, and your saddle horse accidently stepped in a badger hole, and you and your horse went end-over-teakettle and it ended up in a contest to see who could bounce, roll and slide the farthest. And when your ungainly progress had come to an end, and the dust had settled, you picked yourselves up, dusted yourselves off and took up again from where your travel had been so rudely interrupted.

If a leg, collarbone, or some other part of your anatomy was busted, "whoops," broken, it wasn't funny, but there are times when "funny and mad" go together like in the following:

In the early part of this century, horses were a part of nearly everything we did, and everything that happened to us. Like when I was riding at twilight, just poking along, when, two miles from home, for no apparent reason, suddenly the horse, saddle and I all fell in a heap. The cinch must have come unbuckled because the saddle came off with me, and while I was untangling myself from it, my horse got up, shook himself off, and moved to a safe distance so he could take off without me if he so desired, and with the toss of his head and the twinkle in his eye, he seemed to say to all and sundry, "It's fun at anytime to dump your rider, but to dump his saddle too, is pure ecstasy!" And to me, with a last look back seemed to say, "I've hot-footed it long enough, now you have a go at it, and don't forget your saddle." Then he took off for home.

When I got back to the ranch — high heels and chaps, packing, rope, slicker, saddle and all — I got no sympathy. They thought it kind of funny, a lone cowpoke strolling into the ranch after dark packing his gear.

They said they thought I mustn't be in too bad a shape, or I wouldn't have thought to keep my saddle, and assumed that that canny old nag of mine had realized an opportunity had come up to unload me somewhere out there in the dark. When I asked if he had made it home yet, they said, "Came in a few minutes ago and he was still grinning."

That next day we passed over the spot near a fence corner where we had fallen in a heap the night before. It was smooth, hard and flat. Packed by thousands of hooves and not a likely place to fall down — I think he did it on purpose — because, as we passed over it, that over-grown flea-bitten hunk of coyote bait goose-stepped a couple times, added a bit of disco and prances off into the

sage. And in this case, it isn't hard to figure out whom was taken by whom — oh well, you can't win 'em all.

**In the 1930's**

## A Little History Of The Western Air Mail Service

If my memory doesn't fail me, in 1930, the first regular air mail route and service to the western prairies was established. In the late summer of 1930, one of the great bush pilots of the pioneer bush pilot era flew the first regular air mail across western Canada to the western prairie in a light plane. There was a cabin for mail and, I assume, a passenger or two if any, but they were basically just for mail. The pilot sat farther back in the fuselage, the idea being that he might fall asleep if housed in a warm cabin. There was no radar nor radio beams in those days. The planes were guided by beacons, placed, in most cases, not more than twenty-six miles apart from the east to the western prairies. The beacon lights were placed on top of a tower of sufficient height so that each light was visible from the next one both ways along the route; hill tops were also taken advantage of when locating the beacons. (The higher the hill, the lower the tower.)

The base housed the acetylene tanks for the fueling of the lights. The lights flashed on and off, controlled by a heat diaphram after being activated by a light absorbing meter. When there was insufficient light for good visibility, even in the daytime during a fog, the beacons automatically came on, going off again whenever visibility sufficiently improved.

At night, the pilots were flying blind except for out there somewhere about twenty-six miles away was another tiny beacon guiding them on their way. I, incidentally, had a small part in the first mail flown to the western prairies by the regular Prairie Air Mail Service as I was involved in the locating and maintenance of the beacons, and it was with a feeling of some pride and satisfaction that I stood and watched that night back in 1930 and knew that my vigilance played an important part in guiding the pilot as he roared over head with the first regular airmail as he headed west deeper into the prairie night.

In 1932, due to government economics, "Con" Farrell, Andy Cruickshanks and Paul Calder, of the "Prairie Air Mail Service," were transferred to the Mackenzie River Service, bringing to a halt air mail service to the west for some time. Later, radio beams were used to guide planes, and the beacons fell into disuse and were finally dismantled.

**Note**

Strange as it may seem, I've never read any account of the beacons that spanned across the west during the first days of the prairie mail service.

The Prairie Air Mail Service route here in eastern Alberta was north of the C.P.R. main line.

Apparently the **Prairie Air Mail Service** branched off from the Western Canada Airways route at Winnipeg which served Edmonton area and north.

The **Western Canada Airways** came into being in 1926.

The **Patricia Airways** was the forerunner of **Western Canada Airways** and was reported to have, at least on one occasion, delivered mail to Medicine Hat on a flight from Moose Jaw to Calgary some time in 1930.

**Centuring on the 1930's**

## Eating it Out

During those years, Joe Baker worked for the Coopers on their ranch at Walsh. Walter was away most of the time, only returning to Walsh occasionally, sometimes in a month, sometimes not for six months and, anytime between.

Anyway, Joe had several months wages coming when Walter came up out of the States and had Joe's wages figured at so much per month. Joe Baker had them figured higher. After a disagreement over the matter, Walter threw a cheque on the table for the total amount he had figured and said to Joe, "You're fired." Joe said, "You can't fire me because I quit ten minutes ago."

Walter Cooper went back to his business in the U.S. returning about a month later and here was Joe sitting in a big easy chair on the porch reading a book. Walter exploded with, "What in tarnation are you doing here?" "You're supposed to be the heck and gone off the place!" The quiet reply from Joe, "Remember, you still owe me so many dollars more for wages than the cheque you left. Well, I'm just eating it out." Walter thought it a humorous situation and said, "Well, I guess I lost that one. O.K., at your price get back to work and make it snappy."

Joe worked for the Coopers until they both passed on (Mrs. Cooper first then Walter) and everything was sold.

**Centering on 1931**

## The Power of Tea

In the late 1920's and the early 1930's, my brother and I broke

up a lot of land for the farmers in the Walsh area. That in itself wasn't funny, but some of the incidents that happened were. At one place where I broke land, the people being Russian, and me being English, they figured I drank only tea with my meals. Apparently they had never before made tea, although Russia as a whole is a great tea drinking nation. Anyway, the tea I got with my meals was strong enough to poison a horse. (It nearly poisoned me.) I got one cup per meal. That was all I could take at one sitting; three cups per day for one week (6 days) = 18 cups. On the sixth day, Friday supper, I got curious as to how they made the stuff, and if more than one cup at a time. So I asked for another cup of tea. "Sorry," they said, "but there isn't any more left as mom only makes one cup at a time and the pound is all used up." But she's going to town tomorrow night and will get another pound." I said, "never mind, I'll drink milk." I don't like milk, but almost anything before any more of that stuff. I realized I had consumed one pound of tea while drinking eighteen cups of the brew. I inquired as to how their mother made it. The recipe: just under one ounce of tea leaves boiled in a pan that held a little over one cup of water. When boiled down to a cup full and to a dark thick brew, it was poured; I suspect ladled into my cup and then brought to me at the table. After adding sugar to try to break it down a little, it was so thick it rolled around in my spoon in little balls like quick-silver. My spoon completely disappeared from sight as soon as it entered the surface of the tea.

That's one time I kind of wished I hadn't been an Englishman. But they were a lovely family, and everything else could not have been better.

**Early 1930's**

## The Hot Water Bottle That Wasn't So "Hot"

In the "Dirty Thirties," things were bad; necessities of life were hard to come by. . . The old ranch house had been built in three stages so the heating wasn't too good, and anyway, fuel was short and I was young, foolish and "tough" (so I thought), so I slept in the unheated part of the house and didn't move when the temperature dropped. But I did use a hot water bottle to help warm the bottom of the bed. But it wasn't a conventional hot water bottle, but an old crock "pig" (hot water bottle, bed warmer, etc.) that the folks had brought out from England. One chilly night when it was thirty-three degrees below (fahrenheit) in my room, my sister filled the pig with boiling water and slipped it under the

covers at the bottom of my bed — it sure felt nice. But the next morning when I stretched and touched "that bottle" with my bare feet, I nearly hit the ceiling. Wow! Was it ever cold. On investigating I found it frozen solid and had burst. It is now on display in the museum at Irvine, Alberta, cracks and all. As for me, well, dad said, "enough of that foolishness." So we improved the heating a little and as you see, I survived.

**Early 30's**

## Turkeys Wild

In the depression, out on the ranch, we butchered beef and sold it directly to the butcher in Medicine Hat. At that time the city was supplying relief to many citizens in the form of vouchers; meat vouchers, grocery vouchers, etc. There being several butcher shops in the city, the city rotated the point of meat supplies from shop to shop. Each in turn accepting the vouchers and supplying the relief recipients for that week. Money was scarce or non existent in the case of butchers as with anyone else, so we farmers and ranchers supplied the meat to each butcher on the cuff as it were 'til the end of the week. Then the city redeemed the vouchers by paying the butcher and then he payed us.

Some of the butchers and I suppose others, didn't or couldn't pay their utilities. We, and some others, happened to be the suppliers of one who didn't, so the city of Medicine Hat simply seized for his utilities or, should we say kept, the money they should have paid the butcher to redeem the relief vouchers they had supplied to the relief recipients; therefore he couldn't pay us. Not being able to pay, he said he'd kill and dress at a set price my brother's eight turkeys which I had for sale, and would apply it against what he owed me. When I went to get the dressed turkeys there were only seven — the best one was missing. When I asked him where it was he said, "I kept it for my work." I related to him our bargain and assured him that that was just the way it was going to be. He was pretty huffy about it, but finally gave me a note to his wife instructing her to relinquish the turkey. So I went to their home and knocked on the side door. When she answered, I gave her the note. She read it and then violently slammed the door. Knowing of her uncompromising nature and uncontrollable temper I was ready. Just as she reopened the door I ducked, and none too soon. She threw that turkey at me or rather where she thought I was, with nearly enough force to put it into orbit. It sizzled over my head air bound for forty or fifty feet, then slid bounced and

rolled plumb out to the front street. By that time, minus anymore handy ammunition, she had slammed the door again, this time hard enough to almost shatter the house. So picking up the turkey which was rightfully mine, I went merrily on my way.

**The 40 years centering on 1915**

## A Little History

Art Williamson, late of Armstrong, British Columbia, whom I got to know in 1960, must have been from what I gather, quite a character. Not only in his younger days, but all through his colorful life, until he was semi-invalided in his old age.

He came to this area, in and around Medicine Hat, Alberta before the turn of the century, and following are a few of the many episodes of his illustrious life:

He rode with Henry Cavan driving a herd of cattle through the terrible blizzard of 1903. Henry told me that he didn't remember the name Williamson, but my brother Horace said he was quite sure that he knew the man slightly and that they called him "Slim".

At one time he apparently was steam engineer at what must have been the first sawmill or wood working plant in Medicine Hat. But one of his home grown enterprises before utilities were installed, was delivering water to the households of Medicine Hat at twenty-five cents per barrel. At times, business was slow, and at such times, if it lasted too long, he would pay a boy a few cents per barrel to upset a few. This always helped business to pick up.

About this time he established a horse ranch west of the Cypress Hills in the Eagle Butte area. He told me that every time he went into Medicine Hat, he bought as much barbed wire as he could afford, and, using fence posts that he cut from local timber from the Cypress Hills, fenced in just that much more land, and that his "assumed" holdings grew into quite a spread. (In those days, government land was often fenced in without going to the trouble of leasing it.) At about this time he was also buying and selling cattle and hogs, but most of the settlers couldn't speak English, so he had to have an interpreter. He found one; a nineteen year old girl who was very good at it as well as being very pleasant company. The whole family were really nice people, and he and they developed a very friendly relationship which lasted until he and they drifted away to other endeavors.

He also started the first feed lot in Medicine Hat, (a feed lot

for feeding pigs). It was located where the Ogilvie Mill now stands.

He told me that he was the first man to mine coal in the area of Elkwater Lake, starting a mine on the north side of the lake.

He was also involved in the initial developing of the Ajax coal mine west of Medicine Hat, which I understand was started by a Mr. Mike Esser (a very good friend of ours). Sections of the old rail bed that connected the mine with the Canadian Pacific Railway's main line at Medicine Hat still are visible, and for many years, "Sagebrush Annie" was a familiar sight as the little coal train plied its way over the track from and to the Ajax mine. Today, much of the area is built over with expensive homes and expansive lawns. Only sections of the road bed and the ravine up which the little train huffed and puffed her way to the top of the hill are left to mark her route, and her memory.

"Little Sagebrush Annie" is gone now — "forever" — and some of her track has been replaced with the criss crossing of modern highways, and her friendly little toot as she chugged across the open prairie has been replaced by the thunder of high speed traffic as it roars on its way to heck knows where —. Can it all be progress? . . .

After the disappearance of both Lemon brothers, Art Williamson was hired by the C.P.R. (now C.P. Rail) to prospect in the eastern Rockies for steam coal and to search for the "Lost Lemon Mine." He found coal — lots of it — but not the mine.

**Concerning The Lost Lemon Mine**

Most of the hearsay and what has been written about it is mostly speculation. During a few years centering on 1909, I knew the Lemon Brothers. They lived about a block and a half from us in one of two shacks that were situated near the corner of 1st. street and Allowance Ave. S.E. in Medicine Hat. The Pete Hollsteins, later of the Irvine district lived in the other one.

I think most of the speculation was started because of the following: The brothers didn't work for a living but always seemed to have plenty of money. They were very uncommunicative and wouldn't give out any information about themselves or their comings and goings. This of course created a mystery.

Anyway, each summer they would disappear for a few months, returning in the fall to live a sedentary life until the following summer. So the only answer to that was, a "Gold Mine."

It must have been after the summer of 1909 or 1910 that only one brother came back. Of course the "answer" to that was: He had killed his brother and buried him in an unmarked grave somewhere in the Rockies so that he could be the sole owner of the, by that time, "The Fabulous Lemon Brothers' Gold Mine."

The brother who returned, stayed around for a few months and then he too disappeared, leaving no clue whatsoever that would give any light into the mystery of the "assumed" Lemon Mine. . .

After his very colorful life, Art Williamson settled down at Armstrong B.C. and became my father-in-law's close friend and neighbor, and passed away in December 1960 while my wife, Ida, and I were visiting with her folks.

**1930's**

## A Helping Hand — And I'm Now Glad That It Was Mine

All through the 30's was depression and hardships. But there was some humour and optimism, like when the farmers used the hail stones that had just ruined the little bit of grain and feed they had left standing in their fields, to make ice cream.

But there was a lot of sadness, and I was quite often in the centre of it. To live, people sold their cattle and horses down to a minimum for getting along. I was the unofficial veterinarian in the district, and when a cow was taken sick I was called on to help. Some of the things I did would look awfully weird to our modern veterinarians. If a cow took sick and died, someone's baby went without milk that night and, perhaps many many days to follow. I couldn't let the cow die; so with a little know how, a little black magic and a little luck, and a lot of faith, the cow lived on.

If a farmer had only four horses and he lost one, there was no plowing done the next day, maybe for many days. I was called on to help and I couldn't fail, and, thanks to something beyond my comprehension I seldom did. Probably less than once in a hundred instances. It was gratifying to win, but to lose — I try not to remember. I never charged a cent; the thanks and appreciation and the fact that I had been able to help those in need (especially the animals), payed me well for what I did.

**In the 1930s**

## Everybody's Strawberries

Two families I know (fruit ranchers) in the Creston Valley, that have four big boys each . . . Come strawberry time it's the

same as watermelon season, the neighbor's produce tastes much better than your own. For many years the four neighbor boys had raided the one rancher's strawberry patch. He knew who the culprits were but, had never caught them dead-to-rights. This year he would. So he hid in his berry patch. Soon the four neighbor boys climbed over the fence and started to partake of his "so delicious" strawberries. He jumped out of hiding and said, "I've got you this time and you're not getting away from me." So over the fence and down the road to home with their would be captor right on their heels. Then over the fence into their own strawberry patch. They went over almost en masse, including their pursuer who cried, "I've got you now!"

Where do you suppose the five of them landed — right amongst the pursuer's four boys swiping the other neighbor's strawberries.

So everybody said "goodnight" and went home.

**Winter 1931-32**

## Vic Lewin Went Hungry

My chum Vic Lewin, who has passed on now, often came out to the ranch and stayed for days, sometimes for weeks. During a very bad spell of weather in the winter of 1931-32, we were snowed in for almost three weeks. Supplies shrank pretty low. In fact, after a diet of better than a week of beans and bread, we were down to "hot cakes and tea" the last day of our enforced isolation. So for supper, it was hotcakes and tea. Vic looked at the fare and said, "That's breakfast food, I'm not having any of that for supper." My comment, "You eat that or you stay hungry and go to bed likewise." His answer, "I'll do just that," and he did.

That night there was a break in the weather, and the next day we made it into town for supplies and so survived.

**1932**

## Horace and His Motorcycle

One day late in the fall of 1932, my brother Horace acquired a used motorcycle made by the Indian Motorcycle Company. The trouble was, it objected to being "used," so brother Horace felt the urge to do something about that. There being no heated workshop on the ranch at that time, and the weather being chilly, he scouted around for a suitable place to do what had to be done. The house being the only heated building, he decided on that. Mother wasn't overly fascinated with the idea, but after Horace promised not to make a mess and would clean it up if he did, she said "O.K.". The

next problem was, where in the house. The livingroom being the least used was decided upon.

So the motorcycle was wheeled into the "parlor" and set up on its stand and my brother being a good mechanic, proceeded to rearrange its innards. In due time it was ready for the tryout. He set the choke; kicked the motor over a few times; the mag (magneto) went "ZAP" and everything but the house went into violent motion, all joining in a community jig routine while blue-black smoke belched forth, in seconds, the "parlor" was non-inhabitable. Just why Horace didn't shut the darn thing off I don't know, but instead, he yanked the front door open and headed for the great outdoors — probably a matter of self-preservation coming first. Having left the door open, the smoke came billowing out in clouds, almost engulfing the house. In time, that roaring lurching machine choked itself to death or died from carbonmonoxide poisoning. Horace, after getting a bit of fresh air, would have gone back in to try to shut off the cause of the apparent holocaust, but by the way the thing was hopping around when he left, he wasn't sure that he could find it in all that smoke.

Fred Neubauer (Roy Neubauer's father), from his home three-quarters of a mile to the north-west saw the smoke and assumed that the Wood residence had some how heated up and caught fire, jumped in his car and came lickity-split hoping that he may be able to help.

When he had sized up the situation, he broke into hysterical laughter that had its origin 'way down where his vest began.

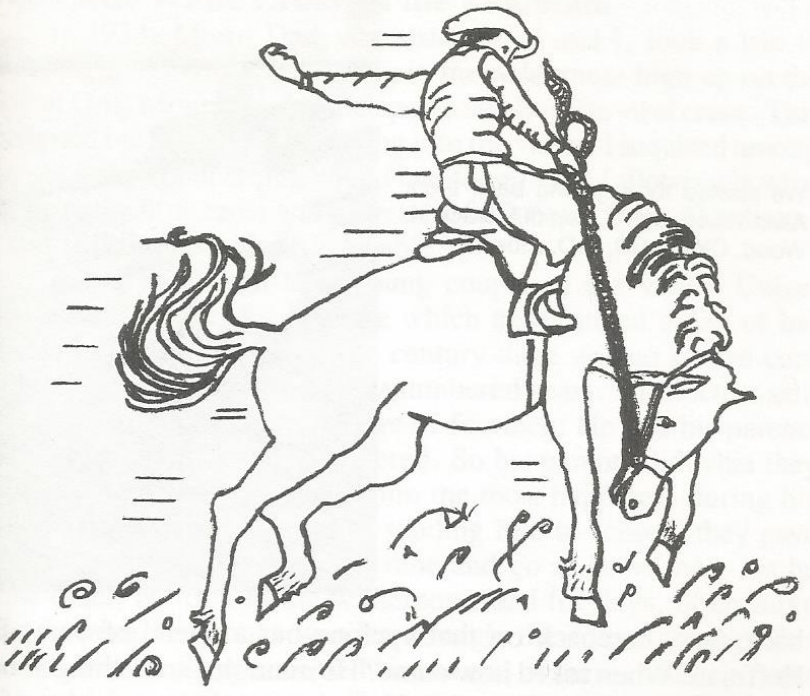
As for the sittingroom — apart from the hole punched in mom's new congolium rug and the smell of smoke, in time, everything was back to normal except mom.

**About 1932**

## The Last Bronc I Ever Rode

My brother Horace did most of the rough riding on the ranch but came the time when he got married. So I said, "You now have responsibilities, I'll take over." And I did. I don't know if that was good or bad but I do know it was "rough." Why a man and a horse sometimes have to have it out like that I'll never know.

Anyway, the time came when we had a beautiful sorrel to break. Horace put the saddle on her and I climbed aboard in the corral — nothing happened. So I said, "Open the gate and we'll see how we get along outside" (that was my mistake). That horse hit me like a truck load of buffaloes, and for one whole hour she



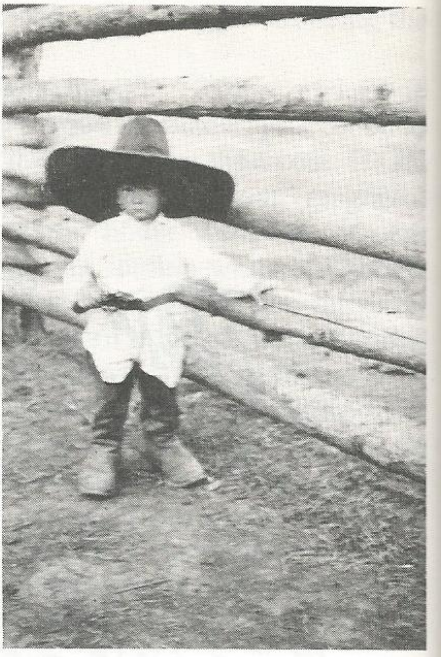
The last bronc I ever rode: That day I came close to taking up knitting.

never let up. I don't see why both of us didn't come right out of our hides. Then she suddenly stopped; I got off, and we stood there looking at each other, both coughing and spitting blood. I got on again and rode quietly back to the corral. As I dismounted my brother said, "Now how about that?" My reply, "There must be an easier way of making a living; I think I'll take up knitting." And by gum I nearly did.

Later a horse buyer bought some horses from us and also wanted a saddle horse. I said, "There's a horse that's been ridden but I wouldn't call her a saddle horse." "Oh that's alright," he said, "We have a guy that can ride anything." I replied, "O.K. then, you can have her."

Some of the rest is only hear say, but interesting. I hear tell they put a saddle on her in the stockyard at Walsh, Alberta and their bronc twister climbed aboard; he couldn't have been watching, 'cause the way I heerd it, she fired him over the corral and halfway up town.

About a week later who should come riding into town, bare



We started them young back then. Alvin Wood, age 5, son of Horace H. Wood. Clover Hill, S.D. Alberta.

back, yes, bareback on that cyclone but a friend of ours, Bill Hoffman. When asked how come? He mumbled something about, bought for a song; a plowed field; and so much dust, neither of us could see what we were doing. Ah heck! I still think she just liked the guy.

**1930's**

## Coal Mining in the Dirty Thirties (strip mining that is)

In the depression years, everything but poverty was in short supply. In summer, "buffalo chips" were gathered and burned to augment the fuel supply. Much of the winter supply of fuel was obtained by strip-mining the thin veins of soft coal that lay near the surface in our numerous sections of "badlands." It was said to have four phases of warmth, the burning phase the least of them. The other phases of warmth were: the mining of it; the continuous carrying of it into the house and stoking the fire; and the continuous carrying out of the ashes, which seemed to equal the amount of coal carried in. Another source of fuel, if you were lucky enough to be within a reasonable distance of a sheep shed, was sheep manure, which was by any appropriate means, cut into blocks and burned like large chunks of coal. (It too had four phases of warmth.)

1933

## The Little White Cross on the Mountain

In 1933, Mom, Dad, my sister Ethel and I, took a trip to Creston, B.C. While wandering in the wilderness high up on the side of Goat Mountain, I came upon a small white steel cross. This intrigued me, so after descending into the valley, I inquired among the old timers concerning what I had found. The following is what led up to the little cross and the reason for it being there. (I believe I could still find it with little trouble.)

A boy was born to a young couple in the valley. Unfortunately he had coeliac disease which necessitated a diet of bananas. In the early days of this century there was no known cure and no hope of life beyond a few numbered years. The doctors said he might live until about the age of fourteen. He and his parents knew that his days were numbered. So his parents did what they honestly believed would give him the most happiness during his short stay on earth. Instead of sending him to school, they gave him his complete freedom to come and go as he wished. As he grew older, he took to the wilderness, and for days, often more than a week he would wander through the forest amongst his animal friends. They accepted him as one of them, and never was he in any danger from them. From time to time he would be home for a few days, then taking a few supplies, would disappear, alone, into his friendly forest — it would be wonderful if we could only know what he learned from his living next to the land amongst nature's creatures.

When he was fourteen, he one day came home; told his mother and father that the end was near and that his last wish was that they bury him high up on the mountain where he wanted always to be.

In four days he was gone, and his parents carried him in his casket far up Goat Mountain, and beside an animal trail through the forest, buried him in a little clearing. Today, all that remains to remind us of a great love for an unfortunate son, is that little white cross standing alone "in his land of dreams".

1933

## "The 'Fisherman' That Got Away"

In a lighter vein — my cousin at Creston, B.C. and a friend were fishing when the game warden suddenly showed up. My cousin took off like a scared rabbit with the game warden in close pursuit. After running for about a mile he let the warden catch up

with him. The warden said, "Where's your fishing license" My cousin replied, "Right here," producing same. Warden asked, "For the love of Mike! You have a licence, how come you ran?" My cousin said, "The other fellow doesn't!"

**Early 30's**

## Prohibition at its "Best" or "Worst"

I was known to drive a big Dodge car and to have absolutely nothing to do with liquor or the liquor trade. (I was known for other things too, but let's not go into those.)

During and after prohibition days, many dances were held in the loft of Phillip Schalht's big red barn just north of the town of Walsh. This particular night turned out to be a dilly. First, a very close friend of mine asked me for the keys to my car as he wanted to use it (his could have been trapped by another parked car), and anyway, we often used each other's car so I didn't think anything of it.

Then some strange half-drunk got the notion that I was a plain clothes cop. I suppose that didn't matter, but I wanted to be thought of as an ordinary uncomplicated guy. So it took awhile to straighten him out.

Then things started to really happen; drunks showed up all over the place. Some how, illegal liquor was getting in right under the noses of two mounties who searched everywhere they could think of but found nary a drop. The police were about to have a nervous breakdown when I noticed my friend's car standing in the open, not trapped by anything. Wondering, I wandered over to mine just to take a look, and there it was, stored in my car. He, and I suppose with an accomplice, were using my car to transport and store the liquor. It was parked unobtrusively among several dozen other cars, but just in the shadow. It was a bootlegging sort of operation and I suppose lucrative, as those deals usually are. But boy! Oh boy! Did they ever get that stuff out of there when I caught up with it! The misleading mode of transportation and the prime hiding place gone, things started to return to normal. The liquor disappeared as if by magic and they got it all out of there without the police catching them.

What fooled the police was, knowing that I am anti-liquor, they never thought of looking in my car.

**1933**

## The Fish That Didn't Get Away

At one place we finished threshing at 3:30 P.M. and had

lunch. Then moved to the next farm where we were to thresh which was several miles away. Somebody got things mixed up and neither the grub nor the cook showed up, so we had no supper. We threshed all the next day without anything to eat. Then the cook showed up but no food, so we all went to bed hungry. The next morning, still no food; by noon the men were getting pretty weak. So in the afternoon I went looking for food. In the town of Hatton, Saskatchewan, or rather what was left of it after most of the town had moved to Golden Prairie almost lock, stock and barrel, I found some bread and a few fishes; you'll say that I copied that from the Bible. Not what comes after you won't. Well, by this time even the cook was "mad", she must have been. Anyway, she had found some coffee, sugar and stale butter. So I gave her the bread and fish and asked her to do what she could with them. Not long after, she called, "Supper". So we all quit, washed up and sat around the table in great expectation. First on the table was "black" coffee and then sugar, then the bread and stale butter and last but not least, the fish. She had thrown them into the pan just as they were and fried them, heads, eyes, tails, fins, scales and innards. We all looked at the fish and then at each other. I remember Ted Roll then looking again at me and saying, "I guess this is it", then picked up a fish by the tail and hauled it onto his plate. We all followed his lead; peeled back the scales and skin and ate right up to the eyes and down to the innards.

They were the best fish I have ever eaten. I've always said, "how good a cook is depends on how hungry you are." I told all of the foregoing to a friend. Later he said to my brother that I had told him the wildest story he had ever heard. My brother said, "That's nothing, I'll tell you the one about us eating the fish right up to the eyes and down to the innards." That convinced him.

**1934**

## The Hamilton Disaster

"Old Harry" Hamilton, mentioned before in this narrative was our eccentric bachelor neighbor. He was a great friend of mine although thirty years my senior. I went to visit him often, and we frequently did things together. He always said he lived to eat, and if that really was the case, he "really lived". He was a wonderful cook, and his soda biscuits especially, were out of this world. Anyway, we were going out for supper to Jerry Dunn's another bachelor friend. But so we wouldn't seem to be eating our benefactors out of house and home, we always had a lunch before going

out for meals. This day, Harry was preparing lunch when disaster struck. He had piled into the old cook stove a goodly supply of paper, shavings and wood, then saturated the lot with coal oil and was immediately applying a match, but it went out, and in reaching for another, in his hurry he knocked the box off the shelf. It took a few moments to retrieve it and apply another match. There was something he had neglected to remember; the stove was still quite hot from the previous fire; the kerosene had become gas and, as the second match was applied — "BOOM". You never saw such a mess. The lids and top of the stove blew off and landed all over the place, the lids bouncing back off the walls and rolling back and forth all over the floor. The oven door flew open and the stove pipes came tumbling down; soot in and all over everything, and Old Harry; I just had to laugh. His eye lashes all gone, his hair and whiskers considerably shorter and his exaggerated white eyeballs set in a pile of soot looking out on to a world that had apparently just been destroyed. It took us two and a half hours to put the place back together, to clean up the mess and make and have lunch — then we went out to supper!

When we got to Jerry's, Jim McLeish, another bachelor friend was there. Old Harry had gone partly for supper and partly to listen to Bible Bill Aberhart preach on the radio. (Some of you will remember him as founder of the Prophetic Bible Institute, and later, as Premier of Alberta). Harry wanted to listen to his Sunday service, but Jim didn't. So Jerry said, "Jim, Harry came to hear Aberhart preach and he's going to, so if you don't like it, get out and come back for supper which will be at 6:00 P.M." Jim got up without a word and walked out; I thought maybe for good. I don't know how he spent the time, but at 6:00 P.M. Jerry had supper ready and on the table which to my surprise was set for four people when Jim walked in right on the dot and sat down to supper as though the whole thing was normal procedure. (I call it taking a man's word at its face value.)

Another thing Old Harry was noted for was "making tea". Not necessarily good, but for him it had to be necessarily "strong". When hauling hay for the cattle on the old ranch years ago, I passed by his shack going and coming. He could see me coming awhile before I passed and he always hailed me in to have a cup or two or three or four of tea. So it was tea going and tea coming and that stuff was strong enough to poison a horse. It never poisoned me but on an empty tummy I sometimes felt the effects. I

can honestly say I don't drink, but I can't honestly say I've never been drunk; not after drinking that stuff.

At times he got the "blues" really bad. He one time was so depressed that he was offering his only love (a very high quality gramophone) to anyone who would put him out of his misery — I offered to do the "job" for nothing — after all I was his best friend wasn't I? After that he reconsidered and cancelled the deal.

Oh yes! he had another great love — "dill pickles" as long as a fork handle (hay fork that is). Old Harry and dill pickles were synonymous. If you found dill pickles, you knew that Old Harry wasn't far away. But he had a friend, Doug Standiforth, who had a great hate — "dill pickles" any length. One night Old Harry invited Doug over for a big supper, making sure there were lots and lots of dill pickles on the table. Harry noticed that Doug hadn't taken even so much as one bite, and was feeling hurt after all the trouble he had gone to. So he asked, "What's the trouble, isn't it good enough for you?" Doug's reply. "Please take the dill pickles, not only off the table, but right out of the room? It's impossible for me to eat in a room where there are dill pickles." So Harry removed the offending delicacy to another part of the house. Then Doug ate his supper. I guess it takes all kinds to make a world.

On his better days, Old Harry was a first class conversationalist; he liked to tell of one of his dad's experiences on his trek west. Many years ago, Harry's dad John Hamilton and his Dutch friend who pronounced John's name "Schohn" were travelling west across the western states on their way to the coastal region. They drove a team of oxen pulling a wagon containing supplies, etc. Their custom was to alternate the driving, each of them driving every other day, while the other man wandered afoot over the countryside, then vice versa. The oxen travelling very slowly gave them ample time to do this. One day while they were crossing Wyoming, it being John's turn to drive, he was quite a way ahead and looking for a place to camp for the night, while his friend poked along about a mile behind. About the time John had found a suitable campsite and was preparing camp, his friend was just passing Old Faithful in Yellow Stone Park when she let go. He, not knowing of the geysers, it was quite a shock to encounter hot water shooting out of the ground — "right now" the scaredest Dutchman in all creation took off after John, presumably making the fastest mile in history. As he came into camp at full speed he shouted to Hamilton, "Schohn! Schohn! moof on — moof on — Hell bestched just one mile from here!"

## Heartaches and Tears

Early 1930's

As I stand alone at the window overlooking my cherished domain, I can see scores of cattle dotting the valley as they drift east and north until they are lost in the distant hills. Soft strains of music float across the room to me from the radio. And my prairie home, though comfortable, seems to grow lonely. All there is in the golden warmth of this autumn day to disturb the silence is the fitful breeze as it sighs past and rustles down the valley to die away in the distance. As I stand here, a part of this great solitude, my thoughts go back to my childhood, but they do not linger there . . . Then to my carefree youth and on to the awakening of manhood with its joys and sorrows. Its joys are great, but so too are its sorrows; what young man knows not of heart aches? Of broken threads in the weave of happiness? They did not pass me by.

One of the most beautiful relationships that ever grew between a man and a girl, because of incomparable circumstances and reasons beyond our control, without an unkind word or an angry thought, came to an end.

I well remember taking her hands in mine, and as I held them, my last words to her were: "If ever you are lonely, please remember that someone somewhere is thinking of you. May you enjoy the things of love and life that I may never know — thank God I never harmed you — God bless you, Good-bye."

Then, holding me close, for the last time kissed me with a kiss that seemed to linger forever. Then said, "Thank you for keeping me a good girl. And please remember that I will always love you." With that she said "Good-bye", then walked away into the starlit night. Thus, a budding lifelong relationship was washed away in heartaches and tears.

In order to not bore you with repetition, I have condensed several years and episodes into a mini novel. So the following, as written, is not necessarily true step by step, but is based on the truth and therefore is a reasonably accurate resumé of how people, nature and time put my life back together again.

I spent a great deal of time alone in the wilderness, but sometimes I shared the quietness of nature with a friend. Not always the same person, but someone who understood and cared.

The character, "Rusty" takes the place of those people. To all of them I am forever grateful.

For hours, it seemed like days, my car sped down the long

white ribbon (the road), which seemed never to end. Down the forest trails and tracks until they came to an indiscernible end in this vast solitude. I'm alone except for my loyal and silent guide, Rusty. I can see him standing on the other side of the campfire looking out over the lake, his strong set features as unchanging as the mountains he lives amongst. What tales this wild self-reliant human could tell, if only he would. But I have never heard him make an unnecessary sound.

I am waiting — you may ask for what. Just for my guide to give the word to start. At last he says, "Come —" I follow him down to his canoe. We get in and push off into the thickening dusk. I can see my companion silhouetted against the silver water; the twilight is as silent as a tomb, except for the soft rhythmical splash, splash of Rusty's paddle as his mighty strokes send us gliding over the glistening lake. I'm watching the Indian campfires along the far shore as they flicker and flare up like so many beacons against the background of mighty pines. For miles we have paddled across the silver water; the campfires are lost in the distance and all traces of civilization are left behind as the mountains loom up ahead and we feel the current of a mountain stream beat on the bow of our canoe. I feel an indescribable thrill as I sit and watch the mighty muscles ripple across the naked and tawny back of this Indian; a "human power plant", as he sends this craft careening over this turbulent mountain stream. A gasoline engine needs to stop for oil and refueling, but the word, "endurance", fades into insignificance as this silent knight of the wilderness sends us up the stream, into the night, into the forest. Hours later the moon sank beyond the jagged horizon casting the forest into an impenetrable darkness. In silence we landed on the shaggy bank and made our way into the night . . . Then my guide spoke, "Mister, you want to be alone", and disappeared into the shadows that played around the campfire.

Day returned and with it came Rusty silently as a mountain moonbeam.

Then passed days of solitude in the land that God has made for man under the stately pines and the starry sky, amongst these silver lakes and streams in the shadows of the mountains which tower almost to heaven, far above the clouds, far into the blue.

Mingled are the entrancing emotions experienced as one steals silently through the dense forest enveloped in the still gloom of night. Here one feels that mother nature is close at hand as you emerge on the rock strewn shore of an unnamed lake, and see the

Indian campfires flicker and dance against the black shadows of the forest beyond the silver water. Here, my guide and I stand watching the children of nature move about in their native surroundings like so many miniature human beings moving against the light of their campfires.

I hear the word, "Come", softly spoken, and I follow my companion down to the water's edge. Rusty puts his canoe, which he carries around with him as easily as I would carry a suitcase, into the water and we glide away over the silvery surf, silently except for the soft splash of Rusty's paddle. We cross and land some distance from the Indian camp. Then quietly as I can I follow Rusty as he slips quietly through the shadows. Hidden in the fringe of the forest we watch these children of nature live their simple happy lives, undisturbed by so called civilization. No taxes, no unemployment; just children of the great outdoors living near to nature, happy and free as their virgin playground, unmolested by their white brothers. I guess Rusty saw the hurt look in my eyes. Anyway he said very softly, "There's happiness —" then added as if an afterthought — "Trouble back home?" Voluntarily I nodded to this pillar of strength who watched over me as though I was his life's concern. At that time I guess I was. Then we returned to camp, and in my mind was a picture of freedom and peace which still remains as a pleasant memory. Then came night in the silent forest, and as hours slipped by I fell asleep to awaken with the early morn to find Rusty quietly watching me across the campfire. If this human marvel ever slept I never knew. It seemed he was always on duty, watching, always watching. I came to rely on him as an invincible source of perfect protection.

Then came time for me to leave this enchanted land. Rusty accompanied me to the fringe of civilization where he refused to come another step. I stood looking toward the land to which I was about to return. Rusty stood watching me with a sympathetic gaze, then came over and put his hand on my shoulder and said, "Brother, that land licked you bad, you came here to save you from yourself. Go and take care of yourself there, as I did here, then no harm will come to you . . ." Taking my hand in a clasp like a ten inch vise he said, "If your world ever has you licked again, come back to where you'll find Rusty waiting for you." With that he slipped silently away into his friendly forest, and I was left alone.

So alone, Rusty went back to his home beneath the stars, and I returned to the electric stars of our civilization, but with me, I

brought that something which inspires hope and the realization that life must go on.

**About 1934**

## Charlie Ziegler Harvesting

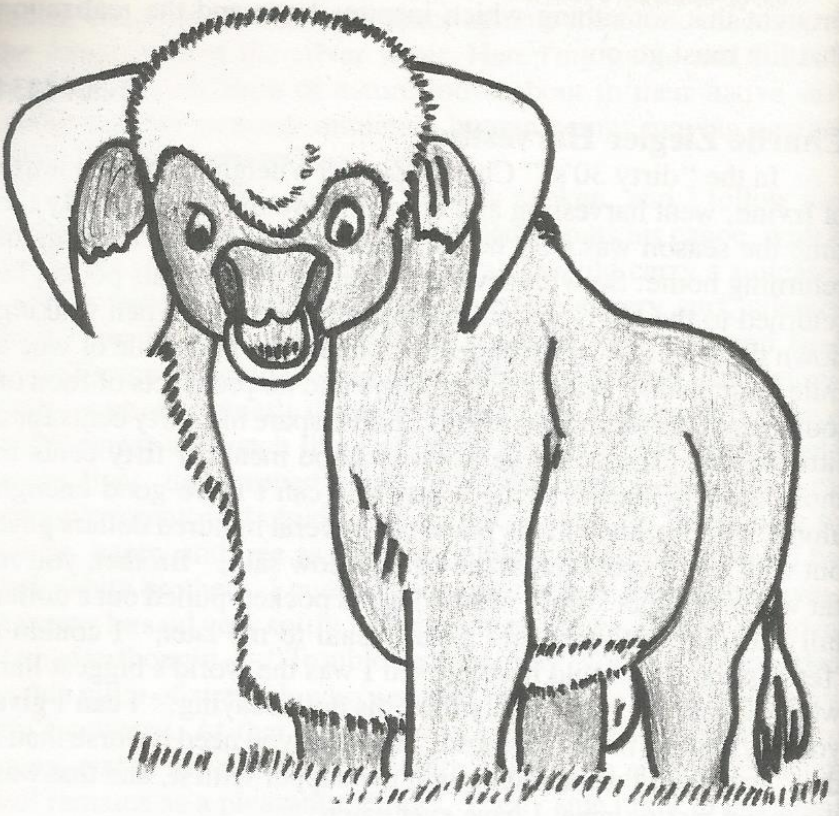
In the "dirty 30's," Charlie Ziegler a neighbor of ours north of Irvine, went harvesting and threshing around Coaldale. By the time the season was over he had done well, and was thinking of returning home. So with several hundred dollars in his pocket he returned to the town of Coaldale prior to leaving. When walking down the street he was stopped by a man who had a tale of woe a mile long; hadn't eaten for three days and no prospects of food or lodgings in the future and would Charlie spare him fifty cents for a little to eat. (You could get a fairly good meal for fifty cents in those days.) Charlie, being a guy that can't leave good enough alone, with his hand in his pocket on several hundred dollars gave out with a story so sad that the other fellow said, "Brother, you're far worse off than I am;" reached in his pocket; pulled out a dollar bill and gave it to Charlie. Charlie said to me later, "I couldn't 'fess up then, it would have proved I was the world's biggest liar, which I was. So I sheepishly took his dollar saying, "I can't give you any change back." He said, "Keep it, you need it worse than I do." And then I went and bought my supper with it, and that was the worst tasting meal I have ever eaten.

**1935**

## Teddy the "Bull"

I know you won't believe this, but I'll write it anyway. How did we get him? Well, we owned the great-grandson of the famous "Dan Patch," the greatest race horse of his time and we traded Billy Patch, the great-grandson of Dan Patch, for a hereford bull. His owners name was Ted Roll, so the bull got dubbed "Teddy." Was he ever a rascal! He would rub the gate open, push out a pole or otherwise work his way out of the corral, and he just never gave up. On several occasions he snook off to try to join the range cattle. At that time my sister Ethel did a lot of the riding, and when she tried to bring him back home, she'd get him as far as the big dam and he'd wade in and float around with just his eyes and nose above water. Ethel, being very afraid of water was stumped. So it was a waiting game — if he came out, she brought him home. If he didn't, she couldn't come home or he'd hightail it back out for the range again. So the matter hung.

One day he had gotten farther than usual when Ethel caught



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Teddy the bull — my opinion of him was ——— "censored".

up with him. So a test of wits began. But in the process, he lost his temper and became too much for her to handle. So Ethel, as mad as the bull turned the job over to me, and by the time I'd caught up to him nearly a mile further on, I was in no mood to fool around. I had thoughtfully brought along a good sized club in case I had to do battle. I did have to do battle — there was a lot of bull and dust and club and horse and me flying around in all directions. He finally thought along the lines of self-preservation and remembering the dam more than a mile away headed straight for it. In no time at all he was submerged in water up to his eyes and nose, and between his blowing and snorting, seemed to say, "Smarty! You won that one, now see what you can do with this." My saddle horse (Old Beauty) was an exceptional swimmer, so in we went after him. I tapped Old Teddy on the noggin according to what the situation warranted. He went under and some circling ripples went out from where he had just been. In a few seconds he came up and

made for us blowing and snorting and ready to renew the battle. Another tap sent him under again, and he came up madder than ever. By this time I was getting fed up with this nonsense, so I wallopped him a good one. He came up again in a few seconds, but this time, feet first. I'll never forget that sight! Our good bull floating around in the pool with just his feet sticking up out of the water. In a few seconds flat I dropped my club, shook out my rope, built a loop and was ready to lasso a foot and tow him to shore where I hoped I could give him some kind of artificial resuscitation, but just before I was able to drop my rope over his nearest foot he flipped over to right side up, swam across the dam toward home, ran the remaining distance at top speed, jumped over the five pole closed corral gate and called it quits.

A couple of cows and two or three saddle horses and the other bulls and Teddy all drank at the well a short distance from the corrals. Other bulls were handled in the conventional way, but not Teddy. He had a corral all to himself. When it was time for him to have water, we just called to him, and over the five pole gate he'd come, slick as a first class jumper at a county fair. After drinking, if he lingered too long we just let out a holler and he'd head for his corral, over the gate and that was that.

My brother and I would tell visitors to the ranch about "Our Teddy," but they thought we were really giving out with the "Bull." So at watering time we'd have Teddy perform. I think some of them went back home and had their eyes tested or went to a psychiatrist because they couldn't believe what they had seen.

**More Bull**

On the ranch one spring morning, two big older bulls were settling an argument, and it had gotten to be pretty serious. A young bull not quite two years old, stood on a hill nearby watching. After awhile he decided that with his speed and know-how, he could clean up on those two old fogies in jig time, and not only would peace and quiet reign again, but they'd also know who was "boss." With this decided, "Fancy Pants" entered the fray at full speed, but instead of crashing into them at the bottom of the hill as he had figured, he somehow managed to get between their heads just as they, after backing up to get a run at each other, were, with their eyes closed, coming together head on with what was to be an earth shaking crash. They caught him, one on either side just below dead centre; he "plopped" like a foot ball that's kicked simultaneously from opposite sides; let loose a 'beller' that would have done justice to a bull three times his size and shot up into the

air. Our hero cleared his erstwhile opponents by a good four feet, came down running and got out of that fray a lot faster than he got into it.

Incidently, when the other bulls heard the plop and the 'beller' they stopped, and looking up, wondered how the heck another bull ever got up there.

**Late 1934**

## The Disappearance of Baird's Hardwood Floor

Old Baird as we called him, was alleged to be very light fingered, and regardless of what was stolen, he was blamed for it. But there actually were quite a few other fingers around that had lost their gravity. The Baird home was far from being a mansion, but it did have a really nice hardwood floor. Baird moved away and in less than two weeks his nice hardwood floor which was nailed down somehow got itself all loosened up and made its way over to the neighbors. They must have left their door open because it somehow got into their house, and all that effort must have really tuckered it out, because it lay down on their floor, and hasn't moved since.

**1935**

## The Years That Took Their Toll

I was going to say "The Dirty Thirties" separated the men from the boys and the boys moved out. But that isn't so. Circumstances beyond anyone's control forced the final decision. Some, because of their former background could not adapt themselves to the loneliness and privations and it was better that they move on. Others tried to make a start in those years, and that was impossible. Most of those who hung on had too much to lose. Not only their life's dream, but the best years of their lives had been poured into their farms and ranches — it was too late to let go.

Man and beast hung on with a determination almost impossible to believe. There was dust, wind, and scarcely any grass; horses had to fend for themselves. The cattle got what little feed there was (and 'often' there was not enough). In order to live, horses clipped what little grass there was right down to the roots and down into the ground. The grit and soil wore their teeth off until eating was almost impossible. This was the start of slow starvation. When their teeth were worn down to the gums, death was not far away.

As I rode the scorched and lonely prairie, many are the horses I found lying down too weak to rise. They would be in some coulee

Gypsie. The cream of the rotunda.

or draw where they had gone to get a little shelter or, at times, dropped just where their strength had given out. Sometimes they would lie for days before the mercy of death came. Many were the horses that were down and too weak to get up that I administered the only mercy available to them. If you had a gun and could afford a shell, that was the easiest way. Without gun and shell it still had to be done. So, with a little practice and a right sized stone, you could, if correctly applied, do mercifully what had to be done.

But it wasn't always that easy. I remember when it came time for my not so old, faithful saddle horse to go. She didn't come home for water, so afoot, I went looking for her. I found her down, too weak to get up. When she saw me she neighed a welcome and a pleading for help. I tried to help her, hoping for a miracle, but it was no use. Even with my help, she couldn't get up. After all those years of faithful service that she had so willingly given, I was unable to help. I remember holding her head in my arms; and I know that a man can cry. I fondled her and said, "Good-bye Old Faithful." As I walked away she raised her head in a last effort; looked at me with pleading in her eyes and neighed for the last time. Whether she really "was" pleading for me to try again to help her or was just saying "Good-bye" I'll never know. But as soon as possible, I had my brother administer the only mercy that is appropriate at a time like that.

People, not knowing how close a man and his horse become cannot understand. But that day, over the Great Divide went a little of me with the horse I had learned to trust and love.

1935

## The Language Barrier

The rural area where we lived was settled mostly by Europeans. They felt that if they taught their children English, they wouldn't learn their own language. They said, "The kids will learn English at school and all through their lives." This seemed to be the general attitude.

One day I went to such a home where a little girl of about five years old was playing in the kitchen. She tried so hard to tell me something about her toys and her play. But I couldn't understand German and she couldn't understand English. We just couldn't communicate, and when she realized it, she broke into tears and cried as if her little heart would break. Then and only then did the folks realize what they were doing to their little girl. A few months later I had an occasion to visit the same home and this time the little girl and I were able to communicate quite well. They had taught her English.

A few years later, most of the children in the district learned only English.

We also had a problem with our nationalities. This one better than that; look at your name, you're a German; you're English with a name like that, at times with uncomplementary adjectives added, and so on. But after the advent of the centralized schools we all turned out to be good Canadians.

1935

## Hunger Unlimited

In June 1935, we and a neighbor, sold cattle to be delivered to another ranch some thirty miles distant. The neighbor hired Bill Appleyard of Walsh, Alberta to help me move them. By nightfall we were still on the trail. We stopped at one of the Dixon brother's cow camps north of Maple Creek, Saskatchewan. We turned the cattle into the field for the night and then I said, "Bill, I'll take care of the horses; if you can find anything in the cabin to eat, you fix supper." Well, he found something to eat alright; a loaf of dry bread, a tin of canned milk, tea and sugar and a couple of pounds of bologna. The milk as butter softened up the stale bread, but the bologna was something else altogether. No one had been to the cabin for weeks and the supplies were rather stale, especially the bologna. It was ready to take off on its own. Those little white things called maggots had made it their home for quite some time. But it was hours and hours since we had partaken of the sustenance

of life, so, hungry-wise, we were equal to eating anything. Bill apparently said to himself, "here goes," scraped off the surplus maggots; dumped the rest into the pan and fried the lot to a crisp brown. "Supper" was ready when I came in, but we were so hungry that even knowing what we were eating mattered not. I must say that that was one of the tastiest meals I have ever eaten. You should try the same some time. A lot of things taste better than you think. Later, our hired man, Reg. Ternan, used to tell the story, but he claimed that we shot the bologna at the door as it tried to get away.

**1936**

## Red, White, Blue and Black

Then there's the fellow who bought a truck and just for the heck of it, painted it red on one side and blue on the other.

It was, I believe, a 1936 Dodge pick-up. In those days the Dodge truck grill was pointed and jutted out in front, receding back to the sides of the radiator. There was a filler between the radiator and the fenders. The radiator shell and front parts were usually painted black. The engine bonnet was kind of hip-roofed with a ridge along the top running back to the windshield. This made it so that you had to be almost directly in front of the truck to see both sides at the same time. With the tail-gate, front-end, fenders and running boards black; one side blue and the other red, and the cab white it caused quite a stir.

One man would say, "I see John Doe bought himself a red truck." Another would say, "You're crazy, he drove past me this morning and his truck is blue." Then another would say, "This fellow is right, I saw it parked in front of the hardware and it's red." Another man spoke up "you're both crazy or color-blind, I was across the street when it was parked in front of the hardware and it's blue."

After several arguments and near fisticuffs, one fellow decided to check for himself at the first opportunity. When that chance came, he did. He walked "around" the truck and there was the "Answer."

**1937**

## Bill Emery, The Pail and The Pigs

In the winter of 1937-38 we had cattle from our ranch and a large bunch from the Ressor Ranch south of Walsh, Alberta, on the Bowlbey Place at Coaldale, Alberta, owned by the late Harry Rowely. One afternoon, Harry and I were hopelessly out-smarted

by a bunch of pigs we were trying to load for market. Bill Emery, a former bookkeeper who had taken up farm labour and the great out doors as an alternative, watches us for awhile with that, "You know it all" look on his face. Time was running out and if we didn't deliver those pigs that afternoon, it was wait for the next shipping day. Finally Bill says, "Give me a pail; show me the ones you want loaded, and you guys keep out of my way." We did just that. Without further ado, Bill slipped the pail over each designated pig's head in turn, and of course the pig tried to back out of the pail; so in full reverse, each pig was steered across the pen backwards and up the loading shute tail first right onto the truck. In less than ten minutes we, with a sheepish "we aren't so smart" look on our faces, were on our way.

My next surprise was at the stock yards. The yard operator unloaded them for inspection and for feed and water if they wanted any. Then I asked the operator, "Do we have to go through that pig business all over again?" "Oh no," he said, "I'll get them back into the truck alright," and he was as good as his word. I don't know how he did it, but he had a four foot length of truck inner tube slit open on one side, in his hand. When he cracked that thing, you'd have thought that a new world war had started; those pigs with nothing but self-preservation on their minds were back in the truck in less than seven seconds. Then we delivered them to the buying agency in Lethbridge.

That was back in 1937 and Harry and I would still be trying to load those pigs if it hadn't been for one smart book-keeper, and, one stock-yard operator who also knew his stuff.

**1937**

## The Memory of a Girl, That Wouldn't Fade

When in the Creston Valley in 1933, I heard of a character who ran people off of his property with a shot gun. Made surrounding ranchers keep their trees cut so that not a branch protruded over the fence line and in general was mean, bitter and dangerous.

When my chum, Vic Lewin and I spent the summer in the valley in 1937, I had time to piece together that character's story and the reasons for his eccentricities. I, little by little (will I say) compiled, his life's story as it related to his behaviour. . .

The first things that intrigued me in 1933 were a beautiful fruit ranch and a lovely log cabin standing empty and well kept beneath two immense Pines in a field where some twenty head of

the finest shorthorn cattle I have ever seen, grazed languidly in the knee high grass.

In 1937, after hearing about his eccentricities and the fact that he had never spoken to anyone unnecessarily for over thirty years, and all the other derogatory comments, I threw caution to the wind and climbed over the fence, being the first person to enter on to his property in over thirty years. I walked over to where he was sitting beside his bachelor shack and spoke to him. Instead of reaching for his gun which was always handy and which I had been told he would use, he started to talk to me. I visited him many times after that and we had many pleasant chats. Sometimes my chum Vic would join us. . .

I guess we had better go back to the turn of the century: Creston didn't exist though the railway already ran through the wilderness to Wynndel. As a young man, he left his sweetheart back home somewhere down in the States and came north into Canada to acquire a fruit ranch and build a home for her.

**His Story**

He told me of his first experience in this new land: Before getting to Wynndel the train stopped and the conductor asked the men on the train to get out and help to move a tree which had fallen across the rails. They complied, and it took seventeen men to clear the tree from the track so that the train could proceed to Wynndel. Afterwards he made his way back to where Creston was later located and settled on the aforementioned land; built a bachelor's shack; cleared some land and then for his bride to be, built the lovely cabin beneath the pines.

My primary reason for going to see him the first time was to try to rent the cabin. He said that he had kept it just as it was for over thirty years, but thought that he might now live in it himself. The town had offered him an exorbitant price for his ranch; they wanted to make it into a park. But he wouldn't sell and would not let anyone but Vic and I set a foot on any of it. More of his story:

Around the turn of the century, after three years of toiling almost night and day, the ranch was operable, and the cabin home was ready for the girl he was going back to marry. He went back to get her, but due to little or no communication at that time, he didn't know that she had died while he was away and was buried in the local cemetery back home . . . He came back to the home of their dreams, closed the door forever, and through bitterness, closed out the entire world until that day that I climbed over the fence.

He still remained a recluse, but some of his bitterness seemed to fade away and he was a little more tolerant of the world. Years later I learned that he had died and his sister had come up from the States and settled his estate. I do not know if he ever moved into the lovely cabin — the home of their dreams that he had built beneath the pines.

**1937**

## Charlie, "Part Time" Panhandler

Many years ago, back in "37", Teddy Ziegler sent his son Charlie to deliver one or two car loads of horses to a man in the north central region of Saskatchewan, near Saskatoon, who had bought them from the Zieglers. The horses delivered and paid for, Charlie was stuck with a couple of idle days on his hands while he waited for the bi-weekly train to make connections to take him home. And of course, Charlie never could leave good enough alone. So he started looking around to see what he could do to raise a little excitement. While standing on the street in Saskatoon, he noticed three panhandlers (in this case sidewalk beggars). Two across the street and one a couple of blocks down. While watching, he noticed that they never went beyond a certain point, begging only in a given area. Apparently the area they had chosen for themselves, and not intruding on another's territory. Charlie said to himself, "Hey! that's something I can do; these two blocks aren't taken. I'll just take over here and I'm in business." He was putting in time, and it was kind of fun. He wasn't doing so well, but what the heck. (If he would have had to do it, that would have been different.) Anyway, after awhile, another man moved in, and, Charlie, just to see if he was right about each having a separate territory and would keep strictly to it, (kind of honour amongst thieves) he walked up to the man and asked a bit gruffly, "Can't you see this is 'my' territory?" "I'm very sorry," said the man, "I'll move up the street a couple of blocks."

**1937**

## Whoa in Hungarian

Tates of the Readimeade district South-east of Coaldale, Alberta, had a classy team of horses. He also had a pretty classy hired man. An Hungarian, who had been with him for several years. The team had been driven only by the hired man almost from the time it had been broken. But one day for some reason, Tates himself drove them. The team used to being driven with what we call a tight rein took off in great style. Not wanting to go

anywhere except around the place, Tates found himself going around and around the yard at a brisk clip shouting whoa and pulling on the reins to no avail. He shouted whoa, again, and pulled on the reins still harder. The team not stopping, he added a few names plus a few adjectives. That caused the team to surge forward at almost full speed. So around and around the yard they went, the hired man standing just outside of the travelled circle watching quite amused. Finally it dawned on Tates what was wrong; the team was used to a tight rein and also couldn't understand English. So as he passed the amused hired man at a good clip, he called to him, "How do you say whoa in Hungarian?" The next time around the hired man called out whatever is "Whoa" in Hungarian and the team understanding the command stopped.

For a long time after that, whenever we saw Tates we'd ask him if he'd learned Hungarian yet!

**1938**

## The Chinese Gentleman Who Shared His Dinner

Many years ago in 1938, when Yak, British Columbia, was just a wide spot in the road, we stopped at a place that looked as though it could be a restaurant. It was to be, but the Chinese gentleman hadn't opened for business as of then. When we asked him if we could have dinner, he said, "I'm just getting my own dinner; I'm not prepared for customers." We said, "Customers nothing — we want to eat." "Okay," he said, "I'll share my dinner with you if you'll give me time to warm up a few spuds and fry some more sausage, and I'll cut up a hot pie I just took out of the oven." So we, the Chinese gentleman my wife Ida and I all sat down together to dinner, and I think he enjoyed his meal and our pleasant informal visit as much as we did.

When we left, he charged us thirty-five cents each and said, "Thanks a lot, I'll always remember my first customers —." We'll always remember him too and also that great pie.

**1941**

## More Than One Fly in the R.A.F. Ointment

During the time the R.A.F. had their training centre in Medicine Hat, Alberta, a young chap from Montana, U.S.A. wished to join the Royal Air Force (British). So he came to Medicine Hat to join. "Oh no!" They said "you'll have to go over to England to join." So that's what he did. Then they, over there informed him that he'd be training at Medicine Hat, Alberta, Canada. I remember him saying to me. "What a crazy deal! I had

to go all the way to England to join, and then they send me back to train a little more than seventy miles from home."

His next notable experience, while practice flying, was: he ran out of gas near the ranch with his gas gauge still showing half full. After hedgehopping several fences he landed with no harm done. (There had been several gauge failures at the Medicine Hat training centre.) On investigation, it was found that the trouble was caused by the very fine dust from the No. 3 gravelled highway that ran past the airport. So good old Dr. Gershaw said, "Pave that three miles of road and I'll foot the bill." And he did. It was named in his honour and is known as Gershaw Drive.

Two of our young friends and neighbors, Ruben Roll and Edwin Glock guarded the plane while the pilot went to the town of Irvine, three miles away, and twenty-two miles east of Medicine Hat and reported what had happened. He was a bit put out when they didn't inquire about **his** condition, but only wanted to know if the plane was alright.

Then what happened, was: they sent down six technicians, a pilot and two guards, and ordered the Montanan to go to town and wait for transportation back to the base at Medicine Hat. His reply. "All I need is a can of gas and you guys get out of my way and I'll fly this crate back home." But I guess they don't do things that way in the airforce. So two armed guards were stationed to guard the plane over night. Next day, the six technicians checked out every component of the plane. Not finding anything wrong, other than out of gas and that the gas gauge was haywire. Then the new pilot took off from the prairie and flew it back to the R.A.F. base at Medicine Hat.

But the night the Montanan reported the incident and was ordered to wait in town for transportation, I'll never forget. (Whether it was procedure or done purposely I'll never know.) But what showed up was the air force ambulance to pick up the "Casualty." Two men dressed in ambulance uniforms got out, and of course recognized their "patient" as he was in R.A.F. uniform. He said, "O.K. boys, let's go," and started for the cab of the ambulance. They said, "Oh no, we don't do it that way." To every one's surprise especially the "patient's," they pulled out the stretcher, dumped him onto it and strapped him down before he knew what had happened. Then loading him into the back of the ambulance sped off for the base.

I don't know if they express their objections to such procedure in Montana differently than we would in Alberta, but I did

hear a few words foreign to our local area, but it wasn't so much the quality of his vocabulary, as the volume by which it was being expended.

Boy, Oboy, was he ever hollering! What I've often wondered is, who dared to turn the guy loose when they did get him back to the air base.

**1941**

## Bombs Away — Anywhere!

Along about that time my brother (Horace) lived in the area near Lethbridge, Alberta and I was on a ranch north-west of Walsh, Alberta, but spent some time with him, there and there abouts.

I stand to be corrected on the detail of what happened, but the gist of the incident is as follows: An Air Force Centre for bombing practice was located in that area near Fort McLeod, Alberta. It so happened that a bachelor owned a half section of land running east and west completely fenced on the perimeter and a shack and a few non-descript buildings right in the centre of the field which were to be torn down and replaced with new ones. There were also some unoccupied buildings in good repair off to one side just beyond the boundary fence, so an agreement for a reasonable price was made between the three interested parties for the bachelor to move into the latter buildings, "lock, stock and barrel." He was permitted to graze his cattle in his own field from nine o'clock in the evening to nine o'clock the next morning. The field was to be cleared of all stock by nine o'clock a.m. and then the bombing started, using bags of sand to simulate bombs. This went on for a week, then the land owner asked the air-force if he could move back into his old buildings. Sorry, was the reply, but we are still bombing them. They then asked why he wanted to move back. He replied that those buildings were the only ones in the entire countryside that they don't hit. Where I am, they clobber my cows, flatten my pigs and scare the daylights out of my chickens. As for me! I've ducked about all of the sandbags that I'm going to!

**1940's**

## There's a Right Time for Everything?

It must have been in the 40's, and some how one of our horses, perhaps on barbed wire or a nail had cut himself on the hind leg close to the hock. It had infected, swollen and was in pretty bad shape. We kept him in the stable so that we could keep

an eye on things. But since there seemed to be no soft spot on the swelling, Horace and I were in no hurry to operate. But our sister Ethel figured the time for it to be drained had come and was long gone, and let us know what she thought about it in no uncertain terms. She said, "If one of you guys will lend me a stock knife, I'll do the job myself." We told her we thought it wasn't the time yet and would do it when the right time came. She said,"if you won't lend me a knife, I'll do the job anyway," reached in the drawer, took out a paring knife and headed for the barn. A very short time later she came galloping back to the house under full steam, the knife and her dripping with blood. As she came running she called out, "Come quick! Do something! I cut an artery and the horse is bleeding to death." Horace, assuming that you don't often make a gash with a paring knife that will cause a horse to bleed to death unless you mess around with the jugular vein, unconcerned took out the makings and leisurely built a cigarette, struck a match and lit it. When everything was fired up just right he turned to me and said, "Tom, let's go take a look." Maybe it's a good thing we did, because just about then Ethel was close to applying the paring knife to his anatomy, and it wouldn't have been anywhere near his jugular vein. When we got to the barn you never saw such a mess. Blood spurting all over the place and dripping off everything in sight. What had happened was: when she applied the knife to make the incision, the horse had kicked, driving the knife in at one side of his leg and almost out at the other, on its way through, severing an artery. I moved in, and between spurts got my thumb on the artery on the inside of the thigh above the cut and applied enough pressure to stop the bleeding while Horace made the necessary repair. Maybe she was right after all; anyway, in a few days the horse was completely better.

After it was all over, we had a good laugh about it. Ethel said that when the blood hit her in the face, temporarily blinding her, she wasn't sure she hadn't cut the leg right off and it surprised and scared her so badly that she didn't stop to look, but just ran hollering for help. Years later when something brought the incident to mind, she said, "Don't you guys forget that I haven't forgiven you yet for thinking I didn't have me a problem."

## Flat Iron on the Loose

Along about 1942, my brother Horace had a very bad back. While he lay on his tummy, Lillian, his wife, used to cover his back from his tail bone to his noggin on the outside of his under-

wear, with brown paper, then ironed over the paper with a very hot flat iron. During one of those operations, the hot iron came unhooked from the handle and slipped inside of his longjohns. The calisthenics plus the contortions plus the muffled censored language produced a very humourous situation. Such being the case, it was some time before his wife overcame the comedy of it all and came to his rescue by fishing out the hot iron. In other words, she did nothing about it but laugh.

**1942**

## The "So" without a Meaning

Along about this time I went to Black's Hardware in Medicine Hat and asked Reg. Black for a dozen or so wood screws. His reply, "How many do you want?" My answer, "About a dozen or so." He then said, "Listen here you, I'm not taking **so** as a number of anything." "How many do you want?" So I said, "One dozen." Reg. then said, "that's better; I'll now tell you why." It seems that when he was a young man down in the Maritimes, he wanted to go from the town where he was to another town presumably not far away. Him not knowing the country, could only rely on what he was told. Asking the distance to his desired destination, he was informed that it was only five miles or so. Being early in the evening he thought he could walk it O.K. before dark. After walking for over an hour (about five miles) he came to a sign on the road that read, "twenty-five miles" to where he wanted to go. So the **so** was twenty-five miles in this case; and he walked all night. "Oh no you don't" he said, "because **so** isn't a number of anything to me anymore."

**1943**

## They Always Come in Threes

Late one night in the fall of 1943, I had to take my wife Ida to the clinic in Medicine Hat for medical treatment. It was after hours, but Dr. Dan MacCharles and Miss Beitch were still down at the clinic. They had just finished sewing a scalp back onto a lady who had lost it to a wringer. After attending to Ida, Dr. MacCharles suggested that we all go home. But Miss Beitch said, "that won't work as we'll be called back once more because these night emergencies always come in threes."

Then they told us of the time a couple of weeks before, when, after two emergencies, they were just thinking of going home when a boy, very much in need of medical help was brought in. The parents had left their two children, the boy three and his sister

five and a half years old alone in the house that evening expecting to be back in a few minutes. They were not only delayed, but had foolishly left a wash boiler full of nearly boiling water on the stove. The little boy, being curious, got up onto a chair to look into the boiler and pulled it over onto himself, scalding him badly. The little girl not knowing where to find their parents, ran down the road to a nearby neighbors and told them what had happened. The neighbours went into action "right now," picked up the boy and were rushing him to the clinic, but when they got to the old east railway crossing in Medicine Hat, the gates were down. Knowing he had no time to lose, he crashed through the gates but as he drove across the several tracks the engineer who was about to take his train across the street, saw him coming, jumped down from his locomotive and stood in the remaining space between his engine and the side of the street. When the man jumped out of his car and asked to get through, the engineer said, "No, not until we have crossed over." Right then the "good samaritan" slugged the engineer a dilly right on the jaw knocking him cold; dragged him out of his way; drove through in front of the locomotive; crashed through the other set of gates and headed for the clinic. Then the operator in the signal tower phoned the police. A little while later the police caught up with him while he was still at the clinic. They said, "Come along with us, for this you'll get the works." Dr. MacCharles said, "Instead of giving him the 'works' he should be getting your admiration. Three more minutes and this boy would have been dead. So I suggest that you two just go and get lost."

As we left the clinic at near twelve o'clock, sure enough, as we were coming out, another emergency, the third that night passed us on the way in.

**About 1944**

## I Could Sure Use the Help

Years ago when we were living on the ranch, it came up, that it was necessary for some reason or other for me to go to town. Having been married for only a short time, I wanted Ida, my young wife to go with me, but she thought she was too busy and maybe rightly so, but I wanted her to go anyway. So without in any way meaning to be derogatory towards the Mormons, I half jokingly and half in earnest said, "I wish I was a Mormon, then I could have at least one wife that would go to town with me."

Her reply: "I too wish you were a Mormon; I could sure use the help."

Needless to say, I never pulled that one again!

**About 1944**

## All She Had, Wasn't Good Enough

The Stevensons, who ranched north of us, ran short of saddle horses, so bought a likely prospect; a beautiful dark bay that could and did run like the wind, and she knew it.

As is customary, after a stint of hard work, a horse is turned out for a few days rest. So out she went, but when it was time to go back to work, said horse had different ideas — very different.

The yard horse was a good cattle handler but not too speedy, (on the road). So every time they got the new bay almost to the corral heading for the open gate, she would swerve off to one side, turn on full speed and head back to the open field. This must have gone on for a couple of weeks when I chanced to ride in on Old Silver. He was a quiet uncomplicated grey that could easily be taken for a kid's saddle horse and, he loved kids. But this belied the relentless tremendously high powered motor that idled quietly beneath his hide. Tom Stevenson knew this, and asked me to run in their illusive bay. So, giving me a sawed off willow post he urged me not to spare the "rod", and to give her such a bad time of it, that it would end this foolishness forever.

We walked slowly out to where she was dozing about a mile from the corral. She gave us a sidewise glance as if to ask, what are you boobs doing around here? Then she noticed we were coming up behind her. So, with a toss of her head she seemed to say, let's have some excitement and started off at a lope that should have left us far behind. But it didn't turn out that way. Before she knew what had happened, we were right on her tail, and I was not too gently tapping on the end of her carcas that usually comes last. This she didn't appreciate and opened up with all she had — then all heck broke loose. Old Silver just let his inner workings unwind; we practically surrounded her. Wherever she tried to turn to we were always there first. And remembering that willow post, she didn't crowd us; there was no place to go but straight ahead. With her feet and legs making circles under her as many horses do when they are really in a hurry, and her tummy almost on the ground, we came up to the ranch buildings at a terrific pace.

Tom had said that he would open the shed door, as she wouldn't try to jump out of there. Stevenson was a little fellow, and I'll always remember, as we streaked by he was jumping half as

high as the corral, slapping his thigh and hollering, "Give her hell Tom, give her hell!"

The corral jutted out at right angles from the shed door on our right, so Silver and I turned slightly to the left, just missing the shed. This forced her right through the open door going at full speed. It sounded like the tail end of a cyclone dying away in the distance as she crashed into the far wall of the shed at an angle and bounced off, and then bouncing off whatever supporting roof posts that happened to be near at hand as she made a quick tour around the shed while losing her momentum, coming to a stop just inside the shed door; not harmed but humbled — then all was quiet; we didn't even need to close the door to keep her in; she just stood there looking out. From then on, if anyone held a door or gate open for her, she would walk quietly through it — the end of that foolishness.

**War years 1939 to 1945**

## A Loophole in the Law

During the second world war, most staple food items were obtainable only by ration tokens and coupons. There was also a ceiling price on many things which pretty well kept the prices down, but, it was not infallible.

I remember at an auction sale a few miles north of the ranch, a milk cow was put up for sale. She was worth a lot more than the forty dollar ceiling put on cows, and the first bidder bidding forty dollars caused a bit of confusion and resentment, so the auctioneer (a Mr. Schnider), said to the owner, "give me a rooster — there's no ceiling on poultry — and I'll see what I can do." When the rooster was produced, the auctioneer said, "the cow and this rooster are being sold together. We already have forty dollars bid on the cow, how much am I offered for the rooster?" The bidding was brisk, and the rooster was soon up to one hundred dollars making a combined price of the two just about the right price for those years — pretty fancy rooster I'd say.

**1947**

## The Power of Encouragement

Just remember that Emma Glock was terribly afraid of Kayo Maser's perfectly quiet bull: In 1947, we had a school meeting at Kayo Maser's, Edwin Glock who has a great sense of humour, and his wife Emma, living less than a quarter of a mile from Kayo's walked to the meeting. It was April, and muddy no end. The

meeting being at night and no moon and the black earth, visibility was nil. On the way over, Emma walked into a deep sticky mud hole and became very much stuck. She called to Edwin, "I'm stuck fast, you'll have to help me out." He said, "Oh no! Kayo's Bull!" Emma came out of that mud hole "right now." Then Edwin said, "See, you didn't need help, all you needed was encouragement." Emma asked, "Where's Kayo's Bull?" Edwin's droll answer, "In the barn where he usually is."

Later that night, Emma confided to me that some day she was going to kill that guy.

Later, in the fall of 1955, the district was working on getting electric power in the area, and as Edwin left for a meeting her last comment was, "If you'll get me electricity for the house, I'll get you an electric chair for Christmas." She got her electricity for the house, but I guess he didn't get his electric chair, anyway, he's still kicking around.

Postscript-1979: Edwin too has now passed on — another of the old gang has gone over the hill.

**1952**

## Long-Johns in a Ladie's Tea Party

For a few years centering on 1952, Dr. John Dixon worked with his father, Dr. Howard Dixon in Medicine Hat, Dr. Howard Dixon being our family doctor, Dr. John naturally got into the act too.

During the summer of 1952 I latched onto an infected throat, or rather, it latched onto me. So I said to Dr. John, "I have an infected throat, better give me a shot of penicillin." He asked, "How do you know that you have?" I said, "Take a look." He did. "Yep," was his reply; "Just strip and stand in the corner facing the wall." Wham! And I got penicillin where you often get penicillin. He grinned over my shoulder and said, "It's too late to run now." My reply, "If I wasn't paying you for this I'd sure clobber you." Then he said, "Put your underwear back on and come to the lab, I want to make a couple of tests."

The offices, waiting room, lab and kitchen were down one side of the house. On the other side of the hall was the den and living quarters with a large archway leading off the hall into the living room, making that portion of the hall and the living room one.

Dr. John's wife was throwing a tea party that day, and we could hear the hum of voices from down the hall. It so happened

that there were several doors to go through on the way back to the office the conventional way, and only two going down the hall and through the end of the living room. By the time we were through in the lab, everything was quiet all through the house. So Dr. John said, "they must be through and all gone home, let's take it the easy way back through the hall." We did, and me, in nothing but my underwear and socks traipsed after him down the hall and, you guessed it, right through the tea party back to the office. (The party wasn't over, just a lull in the conversation.) For that I should have clobbered him; maybe I will yet!

**July 4th, 1949**

## Year of the Big Flood out on the Ranch

Suddenly, out of the clear sky, a cloud formed up the valley a few miles west of the ranch, then suddenly dropped its vast liquid contents at the head of the creek that runs through the ranch making a U turn as it passes by our house.

Fred Neubauer, a close friend and neighbor of ours living up the valley on the other side of the creek, was coming from town, and was just crossing the waterway on a fairly high grade, when the first waters of the cloudburst reached the road. It had broken the bottom wire of the fence up stream and one end lay across the trail. Within a few seconds, the water was surging over the road about a foot deep. It being a dirt road, Fred got stuck right in the middle of the stream. Noticing the water was rising, he jumped out and wired his car to the fence up stream with the broken barbed wire, then got back into this car, but the water kept rising until it was up to the window in the door. Being afraid the wire would break and his almost new automobile would be washed off the grade into the surging pool below, not only damaging it, but could very well drown him to boot. So to save the car, he pried the upstream door open and let the water in, then opened the other door and let the water out. So a great deal of water went, not under the bridge, but through Fred's car, in one door and out the other, with him crouching on the seat nearly to his waist in water, hoping for the best. In a short time the flash flood in his area had passed. And so no real harm was done except he had to walk about a mile to his home, and later, tow his car back to town to have it dried out; crank case and all the rest. Needless to say, Fred was a pretty scared boy at the time, and he willingly admitted it. But later thought it a rather funny situation to get into. The flood rushed on down the valley, washing out completely another neighbor's

garden which, they had planted in the bottom of the waterway, and for the next two days they were picking up washed and polished vegetables for a mile down both sides of the creek. When it came to the U turn around our house, it was flowing so fast it couldn't make the turn and flooded over the bank leaving our house high and dry on a small knoll. Then it took a short cut across the prairie to our dam, filling it in four minutes, then through our garden, washing away the top soil, leaving the vegetables standing naked to their roots but still hanging on (we covered their nakedness with new soil the next day and they kept right on growing as though nothing had happened to them). Then it crashed into my brother's house, and had the door which was open been toward the on-rushing water, I'm sure it would have filled up the house. But the door was off to one side, and the screen door was closed, and the water was travelling so fast that after leaving some debris on the screen, flowed past part way up the screen door with nary a drop going through it into the house. Then it nearly took out a dam farther down the creek, quietening down only as it spread out over the flat valley floor farther to the east.

**1956**

## Mud to the Eye Brows

Rubin Roll, son of Adam Roll, was a very close friend and the best neighbor we ever had, but that didn't keep him from pulling the odd boo-boo. And when he pulled one it was a real dilly. So much so, that things thereabouts weren't likely to be the same again for quite some time. Starting with him having a lake a half a mile wide, about a mile long and not more than two and a half feet deep in the deepest place and a new sprinkler irrigation system, the stage was set.

He knew that his pumping unit, which consisted of a big high pressure pump mounted on his big Minneapolis Tractor would have to be a considerable distance out in the lake to get a depth of water deep enough to keep the intake covered. His scientifically orientated mind had it figured that if he could get up enough speed coming down the long incline to the lake's edge, and a little help from the spinning tractor wheels, the tractor and pump could make it out into the lake far enough so the water would be of sufficient depth for the pump to operate efficiently. So down the slope he goes with the tractor in one of the higher gears and the throttle wide open. With water and mud making up about 98% of the atmosphere, they went out into the lake, but not far enough to get

into water deep enough for the pump to operate. You guessed it — they got stuck — but what the heck, we'll borrow Tom's "Cat" and dig us a hole right here where we need it for the intake.

It wasn't long and my "Cat" purred over the hill to do its good deed for the day. I warned them to keep the ends of the sump hole at a slant so they could climb out and turn around to make another run through as that thing won't climb straight up, especially not out of a mud hole filled with water.

They were using a big frezno and tearing nearly half a ton of mud out of the bottom of the lake each trip as they went to and fro. That in itself was enough to slow up the "Cat," but the ends of the sump hole had gotten rather steep, and still they didn't worry as they had seen us do some pretty fancy driving feeding cattle during the winter and figured "the cat" could do anything — it could and did — it got stuck. The ends of the sump hole had become straight up and down, and instead of climbing up out of the hole while pulling its heavy load it went under ground. Oh well, we'll get the little Ford tractor, with its help the "Cat" will climb out real easy. Evidently they had never before had a "Cat" stuck until then. So the Ford got stuck. Well, we'll use the truck to help the little Ford,and then it should be easy enough. Yep, the truck got stuck, all of them out in the lake, but each one a little nearer the shore than the last one.

It wasn't long before Richard Zeller, Rubin's hired man and accomplice, came walking into our yard. He said, "may we borrow your big Massey Harris tractor, as everything we have over there that moves is stuck in the lake." Then I got their tale of woe; it was sad, but funny. I was tempted to sneak up on the hill overlooking the scene of activity and see just what was going on over there — cause there must have been plenty.

By the time Richard, mud to the eyebrows and soaking wet, came walking into the yard again it was dusk. And like a kid who had just spent his church collection money, dropped his gaze to the ground and asked almost in a whisper, "May we 'Please' have your little Massey Harris?" They disappeared into the night and eventually into the lake — so that was it for the day.

Next morning about 10:30, Rubin and Richard came walking into our yard and Rubin said rather sheepishly, "Well, have **you** any ideas?" "Yep, I've got an ace in the hole. Now, if you two guys will promise to not drive this tractor into the lake you may have it. It's my big steel lugged Case and if it's on solid footing, will pull anything that isn't bolted down." They promised. "Now

here is one hundred yards of cable and some chain, add yours to it and you'll be able to reach right out to the "Cat" after you have the others pulled out of the way. But **remember**, not so much as a wheel in the water or even in the mud." So out came the little Massey, the big Massey, the truck and the little Ford. Now there was just the "Cat" left to come out. (The Minneapolis with the pump was to stay.)

Then came the big pull: with the cat's motor running, and its tracks revolving slowing in the slush, the old Case pulled the cable tight; let out a mighty roar, and I think the area where the Case was, must now be a little closer to the lake, because, something just had to move and it wasn't the Case. But within a few moments, the Case had helped the "Cat" to better footing. It too, then let out a mighty roar as the earth and lake opened up as the "Cat" surfaced much as a whale does when coming up out of the sea.

We solved the staying stuck problem by leaving the "Old Case," cables and chains a mite handy, and to pull the Minneapolis back to dry land when the job of irrigating was finished.

**1950's**

## Irvine, Alberta, Canada (canine capers)

Ted Roll, local sheep man who owned several hundred sheep, one sheep dog and three coyote hounds. Those hounds for some reason just worshipped that sheep dog, and as Ted said, he had to watch them pretty close, because, if for any reason the sheep dog got into a disagreement with anything other than the sheep, those three hounds would kill and eat it pronto. And the same thing would happen if the sheep dog got into any kind of a disagreement with a man, and for any reason attacked him or vice versa they would kill and eat him too in a matter of minutes. That would be awful! And think of the fix I'd be in! So they were let loose only when Ted could be with them.

He and his hounds would scour the countryside looking for coyotes. Each dog in turn would jump out of the back of the pickup and make exploratory semicircular tours off to one side or the other, meeting the truck a mile or so farther on; jump back into the truck to rest and then be ready for another sortie after the other two hounds had each taken their turn.

One time, my sister when out riding, perchance saw them catch, kill and completely eat a coyote in a matter of (she said) seconds. She never got over the shock of it — it was a gruesome memory that haunted her for the rest of her life.

But once at least, there was a funny side to it. One day they did get on the loose and promptly went over to the neighbor (Albert Paul's place) and started working on a yearling steer, but its owner caught up with them by the time they had chewed off its ears. That made him mad, but after he had stopped them and was checking on his steer, that luckily had suffered no other damage, the hounds disappeared. "Now," said Albert, "was when I had reason to really get mad." In my hurry to stop the vandalism I had left my car door open, and when I got back in my car, I heard a puffing and slobbering behind me and when I looked back, there they were, sitting in a row on the back seat of my car all set and ready to go looking for another victim. Right then, man eaters or no, I really blew my stack. I jerked the back door open and went in after them with a pitchfork. I'm quite sure that is the record for the fastest exiting of passengers from a passenger car in all history. They not only got out of my car, but off my farm; howling and yelping in the throes of fear and, with only thoughts of self-preservation on their minds, they roared off over the hill to home and safety."

In a few days the steer was as good as ever, but looked as though he had been short changed a bit at the front end.

**1954**

## Charlie Ziegler and His Haymaker

That fall, the ducks weren't few and far between, rather, many and close together.

As night approached, they came in great flocks to descend on the wheat fields in the Irvine district and surrounding areas; their purpose being an easy free lunch at the expense of the farmers. The farmers felt differently about it and tried to discourage them in any way they could.

For some reason, the Charlie Ziegler family were out in the field at twilight just as the ducks were coming in in hundreds and landing almost in gobs at their feet and all around them, and, there seemed to be nothing they could do to stop the onslaught. If they shooed them up, they just hedge-hopped a few yards and then back to work on Charlie's windrows (swaths). So he sent his wife and one of the boys home to get a gun and a box of shells, they returned with same, and Charlie started to bang bang all over the place but wasn't hitting anything; just tearing up the night. Then as a great flock descended on him almost as thick as snowflakes, in despera-

tion, he grabbed the gun by the barrel, took a swing at the incoming intruders and got four of them.

**About 1956**

## Teddy Ziegler and You Choose the Kids

Teddy Ziegler, a friend of ours, was quite a chap. When he semi-retired, he turned the farm over to his son Charlie and moved to town; whereupon he became a school bus driver. He was supplied with a fifteen passenger bus and a bus route having twenty-one children, so was considerbly overloaded. The Hi-way Traffic Control Board warned him many times about overloading and ordered him to cut his load to fifteen children. But Teddy went merrily along loaded to the hilt. Finally the board closed in on him; two traffic board officials stopped him on the road and asked, "How many passengers are you supposed to carry in that bus?" Teddy's reply, "Fifteen." "How many have you in there now?" "Twenty-one," he told them. Their reply, "This is it, we're running you in." Teddy said, "just a minute," went to the door of the bus and called to the children. "Come on out kids, there's a couple of guys out here who want to take your picture." So out they all came and lined up to have their picture 'took'. Then he turned to the two officials and said, "I like all of these children, and I'm not going to discriminate against any of them by keeping them off my bus. Now **you** pick out the **six** that are to stay off my bus and I'll abide by your decision. Okay now, which are they?" The officials had no answer for that; got back into their car and drove away. Teddy loaded up again, and he and his young charges went merrily on their way. The incident got the wheels of the bureaucracy rolling, and within a few days, Teddy and his young charges had a big new bus.

**1959**

## Fear of the Bagpipes

Years ago, Norman, (now our son-in-law) and his folks, lived at Buffalo, Alberta. They farmed and ranched in that area. They lived in Buffalo, and one of their fields stretched out from the village to the north as far as the Red Deer River. The time came when a highway was surveyed and graded through the field, to, and through the village, connecting it with the east-west highway. After that, because of big trucks and other traffic, there was no way they could keep a gate closed, the fence up or a cattle guard in repair between their field and the village, and the east-west highway. The cattle soon found that out, and it came to be an almost

twenty-four hour a day job keeping the cattle from straying out and wandering onto the main road.

As luck would have it, one day just as the cattle were about to escape from the field, a friend of the Rubbelkes came out with his beloved bagpipes, and marching up and down near the junction of the roads, started playing. The herd broke into a frenzy and let out for the safety of the river breaks a couple of miles away. Rubbelkes and their neighbor realized they had finally found a way of keeping the cattle away from that end of the field. So when the cattle got too close to the village, the neighbor would go out with his bagpipes and let loose a few moans and skirls and the herd would take off for the river breaks at full speed, and usually didn't return for days. This proved to be a very effective way of controlling the cattle.

**1959**

## The Little Ranch the Kids Built

One summer while home from University, the kids decided to go back into the years of their childhoods (to them, years of long ago) and again build a replica of a ranch. Using my tools, and materials scrounged from here and there they went to work — the results were truly amazing. On a miniature scale, there were miles and miles of fence, a dam, corrals, coulees, small fenced in pastures and ranch headquarters. Even they were pleased with their handiwork.

The little ranch was so real that we left it intact, and it remained for several years. Even after the girls had graduated from University and gone off on their own, the little ranch lived on; a living memory to the life we had all lived and enjoyed together. Finally, the weather and the years took their toll and the little ranch was no more. But its image still glows brightly in this now old man's mind, as in his twilight years lives in those years of long ago, as in memory, he watches his two grown daughters slip back into the years that still mean so much to them.

. . . Carol has gone now — on June 15th, 1976 at the age of thirty-five years, leaving her wonderful husband and a young family of four . . .

A Father's Tribute to a Wonderful Daughter:

Carol's life was a beautiful life — her funeral a beautiful sunset — but the sunset came too soon.

Love Dad.

1960

## Ida and the Cow Doing Their Act

During the process of trying to get a cow into the chute for some minor operation, for some reason she got her dander up. Oh boy! Was she ever fit to be tied. She had murder on her mind, and most of it was directed towards my wife Ida who was trying to help me. She chased Ida all over the place. Up and down and around the corral. Since she never caught her it was funny. Still is. It was also funny how old boss would detour around me standing in the middle of the corral, to get at Ida.

Ida being a practical person reasoned that if she could get old boss to chase her into the catch-pen at the head of the chute, we could close the gate on her and we would have her trapped. But nothing doing, old boss was smarter than that. She would chase Ida right up to the gate and then stop suddenly just this side of captivity.

We weren't getting anywhere, and the whole thing would have made a great movie. So I said, "I'll get my camera and you and that cow go into your act, and I'll capture it on film. Wow! This is going to be something." Although Ida had agreed, by the time I returned with my movie camera a few minutes later, she had lost her nerve, and in no way could I talk her into having that cow chase her around the corral while I took a movie.

Ah heck! "Why do 'I' have to have all the bad luck?"

About 1960

## Our Surprised Neighbors From the South

The "assumed" correct opinion that some Americans have of we Canadians is sometimes quite amusing — when coming to Canada, they expect to find a poor backward society, sprinkled with troublesome Indians and ignorant Eskimos. They are surprised to find super hi-ways, large clean cities, well dressed wealthy Indians and immense farms and ranches. Also a wealth of sophistication that will equal or sometimes surpass anything they have back home. We actually lag behind them in only one thing — crime.

The following actually happened, though unconsciously and not in any way derogatorily, demonstrates what I mean.

A couple of our friends were travelling through the Rocky Mountains on the Logan Pass hi-way in Montana when they came upon a party of Americans who were having car trouble. The Canadians stopped, remedied the cause of the trouble, lingered for

a short chat and then before moving on, as they were walking back to their car, one of them chanced to overhear one of the Americans say, "Canadians are people, just like we are."

**1960's**

## The Guy That Was Too Good For The Job

"The wonderful people you meet by travelling and always being underfoot. (Other people's that is!)"

A friend of ours married a man that we, until knowing him, were not greatly attracted to him. We wondered how come, she, a very pretty girl, came to marry him. But when we got to know the man, we realized she would have had to be crazy if she hadn't. As you got to know him, his inner self shone through to the extent that any outward reticence disappeared.

I guess, because of the lack of a garbage collector in town, he somehow landed up being not only head of the department as it were, but all of the crew. In his daily work, he realized the waste that was going on; and many things except for slight damage, if repaired, would be as good as new and still usable. So he set up a repair shop in his basement and went to work at night and in his time off, restoring repairable articles. Then during his daily collection, things that were repairable and articles still good but of no further use to their owners were set aside for future attention. "Your garbage man knowing more about you than anyone else," it was just natural that these articles when restored to usefulness found their way to those who could and would use them. Maybe a little pair of shoes with a sole accidently pulled loose; these would be repaired and find their way to some little fellow who needed them. Often perfectly good articles, through him, were transferred from one household not needing them anymore to another household which could and did use them. Neither party knowing where they went nor from where they came.

People were soon to find this out and kept articles of no further use to them and those which could be repaired, clean and separate from their other garbage. And this didn't by any means involve only the needy. One instance during the time when it was becoming fashionable to have barnyard articles as part of your livingroom décor, a resident on the edge of town not having a milk cow anymore, didn't need nor want his milking stool. So it was set out besides his other refuse, the man figuring Ike would find a place for it. He did. It went into his workshop and came out a thing of beauty. Today, it is one of the treasures in one of the better homes

in town as it takes its place by the fireside along with the other elegant furnishings. But for what he was loved and admired most, was for his attitude towards his service to people. He is a very competent and intelligent person, and the problem arose when the town council "borrowed" him so often to run the gas department that he didn't have time to do his own job as he thought he should, and he told them so.

So one night he was called to a special council meeting and informed that he was now gas foreman (in a city it would be superintendent). He said, "So you're firing me from my present job." "No," they said, "we're asking you to resign and take over the running of the gas department." His next question. "Is there anyone in town dissatisfied with the way I'm doing my present job?" "Most certainly not. You'll be almost impossible to replace; we just want you up here in the department all the time so we can keep our expanding utilities program moving." His reply, "I'm working for the people not the council, and if and when they don't want me anymore in my present job, I'll be around to discuss your proposition." With that he walked out and went back to serving "his people" in the way he felt he could serve them best.

**Looking back from the 1960's through the 1940's**

## Two of Medicine Hat's Outstanding Doctors

One day when my father-in-law called at Dr. MacCharles' office, he found the doctor suffering from a terrible cold. So he said, "What! You a doctor and putting up with a cold like that. Why don't you cure yourself?" The answer he got was a bit startling. Dr. MacCharles' reply was: "If I knew what to do for this d— cold I sure as h— would do it." Then added, "If you don't doctor a cold it will last seven days; if you doctor a cold, it will last seven days."

On a day when Dr. MacCharles was in a jovial mood, he told me he had had a wealthy widow in the hospital since they had room, more because she wanted to be there than needed to be. When his son "Pat", was discharged from the army and came back from overseas and joined him in his practice, he one day turned her over to Dr. Pat to be one of his patients — then he laughed and continued — Dr. Pat came back from the hospital and said, "I discharged Mrs. so and so as there isn't a thing in the world the matter with her." So I said to him, "Maybe not, but she sure was a

heck of a good meal ticket." But all joking aside, Doctor MacCharles was an exceptionally good doctor.

*Appendix*

Old Dr. MacCharles several years ago passed on, leaving a great void in the ranks of his many patients and friends. And he will always be remembered as is evident in the naming of the Dr. Dan MacCharles Park, which was named in his honor.

His son, Dr. Pat as he was affectionately called, followed in his father's footsteps — they made a great team — and when Dr. Pat went on to join his father, he too, left behind a great host of patients and friends, and a memory that is relevant to the fine doctor that he was.

**About 1961**

## Schorr and His U Turn

There must be some humor hidden in the guy somewhere . . . without cracking a smile he pulled the following: At the end of a T Street in Medicine Hat, he was starting to make a U turn around the cop who happened to be standing in the intersection. The cop stopped him and said, "You can't make a U turn here." Schorr got out of his truck and looked the situation over, then said, "I think I can." He then got back into his truck, completed the U turn around the policeman and drove back up the street.

The cop said, "By the time I had that figured out, he was long gone, and anyway, I was laughing too hard to do anything about it."

*Appendix*

Mr. Schorr is gone now and is greatly missed by his many friends, and especially by his family.

**About 1962**

## Truth is Stranger Than Fiction

A tourist was driving through the mountains when he had a flat tire on his camper. He jumped out of the cab ranting and swearing almost beyond belief. He tore out his tool box and threw it to the ground; tore out his jack, ripped off the hub cap, then tore his spare tire loose from off the top of the camper and threw it to the ground; it bounced — you guessed it — right off the road into the canyon below.

While this was happening, another tourist had stopped to lend a hand and had been watching. When the chap in trouble still swearing as hard as ever, jumped down from the camper and

started kicking everything in sight, still roaring at the top of his voice, the fellow who had stopped to help, quietly got out of his car, and saying, "I'll help", picked up the fellow's tool box and threw it into the canyon after the spare tire; got back into his car and quietly drove away.

By the look on the first man's face, his heart must have stopped for several moments before starting up again, and when it did, he was mad no more. The above episode is proof that Truth is Stranger than Fiction.

**1963**

## My Last Day of Ranching

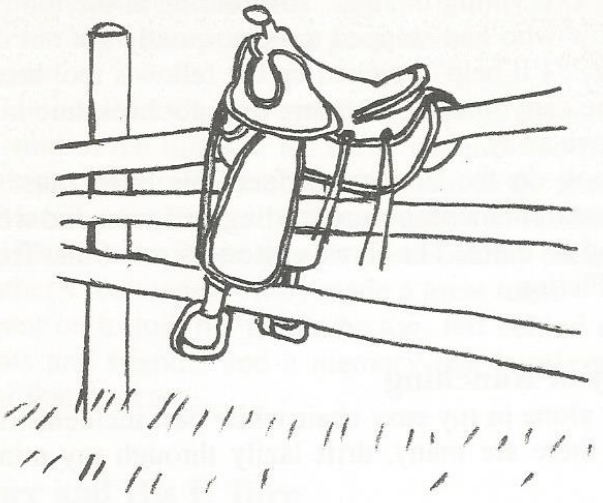
I often sit alone in my easy chair while past incidents of my life, of which there are many, drift lazily through my mind in retrospect.

My last day of riding on the old ranch for instance: It comes back to me now. I do not remember it in detail, but as I recall, it ended somewhat like a movie.

After hours of working with the cattle, my palomino and I, with the smell of sweat and saddle leather in our nostrils became a silhouette as we for the last time headed homeward into the sunset.

To-night as I sat here writing this, on the radio they sang, "To-night There's An Empty Saddle In The Old Corral." What a coincidence! There was an empty saddle in my old corral that night.

With the smell of sweat and saddle leather in our nostrils, we became a silhouette as for the last time we headed homeward into the sunset . . .



My empty saddle on the old corral . . . The night we parted . . . I wonder where my old saddle is now.

After supper, in the moonlight, I took my saddle off my horse and hung it on the top rail of the old corral. Then opening the gate, I gave Old Faithful a gentle pat as she passed through and disappeared into the silvery night — and my ranching days were over.

**1963**

## The Moose Came Up

My wife Ida is a great one for writing letters and has correspondents all over the world. So in the spring of 1963, we travelled all over the country to visit as many of them as possible. Our contacts with these people were, to say the least, varied and interesting. One of our more interesting visits was with the Ritceys of Kamloops, British Columbia. Ralph is chief biologist for the Kamloops district and in temperament, his wife Clara is his counterpart.

In the past, he spent a great deal of time out in the wilderness checking wildlife and habitat conditions. Clara often went along armed with an adventurous spirit and her inevitable camera . . .

They may do it differently now, but at that time, to tag a moose was done by lassoing a front foot and snubbing the animal to a tree with that foot and then applying the tag. If they can't catch a front foot to start with, they follow the critter till it goes on the fight. When chased, the men climb a tree and a couple of trained dogs manouver the moose under the tree and into a noose dropped

to the ground by its would be captors upstairs. Then the tagging proceeds. They say a moose is quite easy to handle when one foot is tied to something. Ralph says the trouble starts after you turn them loose.

One time just as Clara was coming up to a trail she heard a commotion off to her left. In a few moments here comes Ralph at full speed with a moose close behind with its sights on the seat of his pants. She decided there wasn't much the matter with Ralph or he wouldn't have been travelling at that speed, but was concerned about what had happened to the helper. She inquired of Ralph about this as he tore past — then the words came floating back to her. "Don't worry about John, he's over the hill long ago."

(I understand that if you can keep ahead of an angry moose for a hundred yards or so, he'll lose interest and say to heck with you.) Anytime I've had a similar experience, I've put the hundred yards or so behind me alright, with the "so" representing something like a mile.

One night, Clara was showing us some slides, several of which had slight purple markings on them. "I'll have to tell you about that," she said. Well, it seems that Ralph was just off shore in his canoe, and as he rounded a bend in the shoreline a moose that had been foraging on the bottom of the lake, chose that moment to surface, and coming up directly beneath the canoe dumped Ralph into the lake. When he came up a few moments later, he had a few choice names for that moose and a few descriptive adjectives for things and conditions in general — "I didn't happen to have my camera — how could I know that was going to happen? But I doubt that I could have taken any pictures anyway as I was laughing too hard, which of course didn't improve Ralph's, just then, outlook on life, but I'll admit that although his personal comments were a bit colorful, they were well within the adopted standards of society.

Well, the exposed film of those slides was in Ralph's pocket when the moose dumped him in the lake — hence, the purple marks — and I still tease Ralph about the film coming out of the drink in better shape than he did."

**1963**

## Are All Ministers Alike?

At the Texaco in Irvine: While Stan Wilde, owner and operator was away in Europe, Ida and I and Rev. Allan Hunt, our United Church minister, were having lunch at the Texaco Coffee Shop. Ida

and I were helping out as staff and Allan was having lunch before going out to Graburn south of Walsh to take the service there. Things had gotten pretty much into a bind because of lack of help, so Rev. Hunt left his lunch and went out to the gas pumps and gave a customer gas. When through, he hung up the hose and went to get the money for the gas offered to him through the open car window. Being a humorous chap, and wearing his clerical collar he couldn't resist saying, "I'll bet that's the first time you ever got gas on a Sunday from a minister." The nonchalant reply, "I get it from our minister every Sunday from 11:00 to 12:00 O'Clock noon."

**1963**

## Andy and Charlie Glock — Friends You Don't Easily Forget

A blacksmith friend of ours, Andy Glock, along with his brother Charlie, also a friend of ours, lived in our home town of Irvine, Alta. and did our blacksmith work for many years, finally selling out to Jack Bechtold who still runs the business.

Charlie (Chuck) later moved to Duchess, Alberta, and went into business by himself. I some how lost track of Chuck's comings and goings, but Andy moved to Vernon, British Columbia. We some how kept track of him, and when we visited him for the first time in his new home, he talked non-stop for six hours and ten minutes . . . I timed him.

He worked in the lumber business in Vernon until it was time for him to retire — something he didn't want to do. So after cajoling, and pleading and everything else but bribery and threats, the Forestry Department gave him a job as fire watcher. But while he was still in the base camp, the department was about to purchase eight hundred axes at $2.85 each. So Andy said, "Give me two or three men to help, and I'll reshape and resharpen them for you in my working hours, and that way it will cost you about fifty cents a piece; a saving of one thousand, eight hundred and eight dollars. The officials said, "What do you know about axes and blacksmithing anyway?" His reply, "I was a blacksmith all my life until I got into the lumber trade a few years ago." And so for a short while, he was again a blacksmith.

When the time came for him to go to his fire watch tower and was being out-fitted with helmet, slicker and frog pants which came up to his arm pits (something like fishermen use in streams), he said, "I have a good pair of rubber boots, I don't need those rubber pants." So away he goes to his watch tower. While climbing

the mountain one day, a heavy rain storm came up driven by a high wind. To hear Andy tell it, the rain came up the mountain side, up under his slicker and out at his collar and ran back down on the outside of his slicker, filled his rubber boots to the top and otherwise drenched him to the skin. After that deal he dressed just like other firewatchers do when it rains, rubber pants and all. From then on life went along pretty smoothly, and he really enjoyed his work.

Tea, coffee, water and sugar were unlimited, but other food supplies were brought in every third week, just a three weeks supply for one man, so Andy couldn't give extra meals to anyone, but could entertain with tea or coffee. Passers-by were almost nonexistent except for a sheep herder who was running a flock of sheep in the mountains in the area. Every day he brought his own lunch and called in to have it with Andy. Andy supplying the tea or coffee as they visited together.

Occasionally Andy's wife would visit him for a few days, but brought enough food for herself. Sometimes she would bring flour, fruit, etc., and do some home cooking. On one occasion she left the makings for biscuits along with some other supplies. So Andy said to himself, here's where I have some fresh home made biscuits and proceeded to make some — the results were terrible — he just couldn't eat them. So when his herder friend called to have lunch with him, just for the heck of it, Andy said to him, "My wife left some extra supplies, and I've made some fresh biscuits and I want to share them with you." So saying, he gave his friend more coffee and placed the fresh biscuits in front of him. His guest ate one, so Andy urged him to have another. Not wanting to hurt Andy's feelings, he slowly ate one more. On the invitation to have a third, he politely refused. Andy, feigning being hurt said, "If you don't eat another of of my biscuits, you're no friend of mine." His friend's reply, "If I eat another of your biscuits, I won't be a friend of anybody." Andy really got a bang out of that and laughed every time he told it or even thought of it.

Andy spent several happy years in the employ of the forestry service and then retired to their home in Vernon.

He has now passed on and another link with the past is broken.

**1963**

## Camp and 60 Boys to Help

After helping Stan and Eileen Wilde for awhile, and then

taking a trip, we ended up running the United Church Camp at Elkwater, Alberta.

Camping is always quite an experience, but, when you have fifty to sixty boys to help you, it's something else again. We ran the camp for four years and enjoyed every moment of it; many times things were funny, and sometimes, not so funny, but nonetheless interesting.

The humorous side: One little fellow morally supported by his pal was giving one of the leaders a bad time of it. After he had gone far enough and gotten a little smart-alecky, I said to him, "That's enough, you quit it or else." He turned to me with, "or else what?" My answer off the top of my head was — "or else I'll fill your pockets with syrup." (I just had to come up with something terrible.) That knocked the props from under him; crestfallen he turned to his little pal and said, "Wouldn't that be awful." Then he brightened up with, "Am I lucky, you know what, I've got four pairs of pants." (That nearly brought the house down and me not supposed to laugh.) Being close to the door I made it outside and then laughed until it reverberated through the pines. I had to, or I would have blown apart right down the seams . . . "That's one I lost" . . .

**1963**

## The Carefullest Boy in Camp

At camp, a boy about nine years old was having trouble driving a nail into something. I think he was using a stone without much success, so he came to me and asked if he could use my hammer. (We have to be careful about letting the kids use tools as they might hurt themselves or others.) So I said, "Yes, but only if you'll make sure no one is close to you and you'll promise to keep both hands on the handle." "I will," he promised. But in a few minutes he was back with blood squirting out of a furrow plowed through his scalp from the nape of his neck almost to his eyebrows. After we had the torrent stopped and him comfortable, I asked, "Why didn't you keep both hands on the handle?" He said, "I did." He evidently was taking a big two-handed swing over his head from back to front, when the hammer caught on something overhead, causing the claws to make a smaller arch than was intended, scraping his head. And him, evidently intent on finishing the job with one blow, was supplying the kind of power which would not and did not stop.

1963

## The Splash of Authority

At camp one evening just after dark, I caught the C.G.I.T. girls down by the creek. Two of them had a leader, one holding her hands, and one holding her feet and swinging her back and forth intent on throwing her into the stream. I said, "Hey! You can't do that." They said, "Oh yes we can." And the leader's reply was, "It's alright, I've got it coming."

I never found out what she had done to deserve that treatment, but she evidently felt that the punishment suited the "crime", so it was O.K. by me. You know what — a leader makes much the same kind of a splash that anyone else does!

1963

## Turkeys All Sizes

When Ida and I retired in 1963, and bought a large home in the town of Irvine, Alberta, there were still several of the Wood family out on the ranch. So Ida says to me, "We'll have the bunch from the ranch in for Christmas; go buy the largest turkey you can find." Accordingly, I informed one of our local store keepers (Herman and Vic Wiedemann) of her wishes. In a couple of days, Herman told me that our turkey was here, but he said, "You'd better take it home and see if it will fit in your oven. It's **only** forty-two pounds and almost as big as a calf." We had left our big old range out on the ranch, and had bought one of those new fang-dangled contraptions termed "kitchen cook stove." That turkey go in that oven — Heck! Even when I put it on top of the stove, it stuck out beyond the stove in all directions. The store offered that if they couldn't get a smaller one for us, they would cut it into four pieces and we could roast it a quarter at a time and they would keep the rest in their deepfreeze until we wanted it. Anyway, in a couple of days they picked up a fourteen pounder which was just right. So here I had forty-two pounds of surplus turkey. The following Sunday, Gordon Woodward said to me, "I need a great big turkey and I can't find one." I replied, "Yes you can. I have a forty-two pounder at the store, but before you buy it you'd better measure it to make sure it will fit in your roaster and likewise go into your oven." His reply, "We have a real roaster and a big oven but I'll check just to make sure." So on Monday morning, he walks into the store with an enormous roaster under his arm, fits the turkey snuggly into it and walks out, turkey and all, right under the noses of the store keepers, without saying a word. A few days after

Christmas, Herman asked me from whom Gordon had bought the turkey, them or me? I said, "It looks like he didn't even buy it, just ate it!"

There were more than twenty people at Woodwards for Christmas and they cleaned it up in one meal and one or two lunches. So they ate well over a pound of turkey each.

A few days later, Gordon asked me whom he was supposed to pay for the turkey. I told him I hadn't paid for it yet so he should just pay the store — and he did.

**Reflections 1960's**

## Reflections

Today, as I walked across the prairie I crossed an old cattle trail and it took me back over the years, and in memory, I spent a day on my old palomino riding the old range, working the old cattle which long ago went over the hill for the last time. I see the calves that called to their mothers from the hilltops; the fences which were supposed to keep out all comers but never did; the battles of the lords of the plains; the gouges and ruts they tore in the prairie as if torn by a mighty hoe.

Then I drifted farther back into the past, lost to the present, as in memory and longing, again mounted on my favorite Arabian (Old Silver) we once again worked and roamed amongst those hills and valleys we loved so well. . .

*Old Silver.* Looks simple when you know your stuff.

**1931 through 1959**

For more than twenty years we continually worked and

roamed together through soft balmy days of spring, torrid days of summer, the gold of autumn and the raw nakedness of winter as we battled the elements to do that which needed to be done. . .

I'm sitting on the patio out on the old ranch — it is moonlight; and all the way across the lake the moon is casting a shimmering golden path which ends at the shore a few rods from where I'm sitting. The night is still and silent, and at a time like this it is so easy for an old man to live again in memory, those yesteryears of long ago, and it would take volumes to relate the kaleidoscope of happenings as they drift by as clear and real as though they happened only yesterday. A cowboy's greatest tribute to his saddle horses is 'remembering' — remembering the things they did and shared together; the soft spring sunshine; the agonies of bitter cold and all the other things that came between.

I rode many saddle horses during my cowboy days, and the following is relevant to all of them, but I will at this time refer only to Old Silver, my last saddle horse to leave the ranch before I did.

In our last years together I rode him only for old times sake. But the end was soon to come. After a few years spent in a lovely pasture used only for retired saddle horses, he in actuality, and I in sadness, together for the last time, except in my memory, went over the last hill and far beyond the sunset. And when he went, a little of me went with him, and that "little" and he are roaming together amongst the hills of Eternity which he must have learned to love by now.

I can still see Old Silver, first, as the grand proud saddle horse that he was, second, as a superb friend and servant although a little subdued by the ravage of miles and time. Then as he lay cold and still in the moonlight never again to lift his proud and noble head, or to gallop again across the prairie with his mane and tail flowing in the prairie breeze I realized that for him it was the end of the road and, for me, a bend in the trail — and now, each evening that I watch the sun go down I remember, and a little more of me passes through the golden glow and is gone forever.

**1963-64**

## We Retired or Did We?

Ida and I retired Jan. 1st., 1963. We later helped Stan and Eileen Wilde at the garage and in the coffee shop that they owned jointly. In the winter of 1963-64 a couple moving from Ontario to the Pacific Coast stopped in at the Café for dinner. Eileen not being around at the time, I called Ida over from our home a block away to

cook their dinner. He griped, grumbled and snorted from the start about how no one could cook a steak worth a darn or, had one worth cooking. Ida said, "I have a steak in the deepfreeze; I'll show it to you." She did, and he approved of it with another run through of how nobody but nobody could cook a steak right. He gave specific instructions as to how he wanted it done. After listening to his endless chatter, Ida figured out what he wanted, which, consisted of searing it on the grill on one side, then doing the same with the other. This thawed it out but it was still pretty rare. As she was taking it to their table she passed me, and I remarked, "Cripes! I've seen many a cow hurt worse than that and get better." He really got a bang out of that. But the steak was just right for him, so his wife gave him mild heck and made him admit it to Ida and also to apologize for all his beforehand unwarranted criticism. And although he seemed to think that all restaurant help were just servants, he couldn't have been all bad, because I have seldom heard any person laugh like that guy did at my remark. But when Ida took off her apron and donned her fur coat, his eyes just popped. He said "Wow! a cook wearing a coat like that!" And to me, "I bet that coat let you down a pretty penny." Then Eileen, who had just returned answered him by saying, "Cows bought that coat, and she isn't the cook, she doesn't have to cook for you or anybody else. She just came over to help me out so that you could eat."

**1965**

## Our Little Friends

Years ago a robin and his pretty little wife came to spend the summer with us, and to live and love in the trees surrounding our home.

They came early in the spring while the snow lay deep beneath the trees. Their song was subdued and quiet in fits and starts as they dined on the berries of our cotonia esta just outside our livingroom window. And many are the pleasant hours we spent watching them flit from branch to branch as they went about their little lives, eating the tender berries as were and picking and dropping the tough ones into the wet snow to soak and soften to be eaten later.

Then came spring, and their song burst forth as though the whole world must know of their devotion to each other and their plans for the summer.

Then came the warm winds, and they were both busy, he

collecting material for their little nest that she was building high up in our huge elms. It was fascinating to watch. Especially him as he selected five or six pieces of building material, gathering it all in his beak at one time and delivering it to his mate as she worked and built their little home, thus saving himself many trips during the day. By accident we found that odd bits of string were a prized article of building material, so we made certain there was plenty of that commodity available to them, and in this way we felt that we had an interest in their little plans and lives.

That summer they raised a family of little robins which grew up and left early in the fall and went on to give pleasure to others like ourselves. But the old couple lingered till the threat of winter was in the air. They sang little now. Just flitted about as though reluctant to leave. Then one morning all was quiet, and we realized that our little friends had gone. And a little of us must have gone with them as things didn't seem quite the same anymore. The garden was a silent lonely place, and even the cotonia esta seemed to droop a little when its little friends didn't come each morning to rest on its upper branches as they watched us through our picture window. But our robins had gone south, and wouldn't be back till spring. So we waited . . . and for several years at the same time this little couple returned and joined us again to cheer our lives and to live and love amongst the trees they loved so well.

But two years ago some trigger-happy vandals shot the pretty mother. There was no more singing that year as he worked alone from dawn to dusk to feed and care for the little fellows who were luckily almost ready to take off on their own. In a short time they did. But he remained with us for many more weeks as if reluctant to leave a memory which had meant so much to him. He would sit silently in the naked branches as though waiting for the threatening winter to roar down on him from the north and end it all. But with a few hours to spare, a heavy heart and many memories of happier times he took off for a sunnier climate. This was a sad parting, not so much that a little of us went with him, but a lot of him stayed with us.

We thought we would never see him again. But the next spring while the snow lay deep over the prairie, he came back. And for weeks he hunted and hunted for his little mate, just in hope that by some miracle she would still be here — he never sang again, but flitted silently from tree to tree and from here to there — peering into our window, looking under bushes, flying far afield, looking everywhere he thought she might be. But on his more hopeless

days, he would quietly sit near their old home from dawn to dusk, a dejected creature in a world of pain.

Again he stayed in the fall till winter was roaring down from the north. Then on a cold bleak morning he took to the air and after making a few circles around his land of by-gone dreams, he seemed to dip his wings in a last farewell and was gone.

In the spring we wondered and waited and waited and he didn't come. Then one morning we heard him at our window. It wasn't a song, just a chirp to say, "I'm back," and look who I have with me . . . he must have met a pretty widow on his sojourn to the south.

She was a lovely pretty thing. So much like his former mate that it was hard to believe she hadn't returned. And so, these two set to work to try and rebuild two shattered dreams — he in his old stomping ground and she in a new land. She is a good wife and mother and he is a good scout. And sometimes early in the morning our garden will ring with a duet; a subdued melody of perfect companionship, filled with a memory of those other two who have gone before.

**1966**

## Before Women's Lib.

After a four hundred mile drive we stopped for the night. Next morning it was raining, and three feet from our window was a robin's nest. Normally the little lady leaves the nest to forage for food. But since it was raining, she couldn't leave their precious eggs uncovered. So, as we watched, Mr. Robin made several trips to find and bring breakfast to his little queen. She took and ate each morsel as he gave it to her. "And they say chivalry is dead."

**1966**

## A Few Days Spent in the Mountains

Left Irvine, at 9:20 Thursday morning October 6, slipped up to Medicine Hat in time to get into the bank as soon as it opened; stopped in Redcliff to visit some old friends — consequently, tea.

After rolling through the sparsely populated area east of Suffield, we broke out into the tractless prairie which rolled away in every direction as far as the eye could see, the great expanse broken here and there only by herds of cattle and small bands of antelope. Oh yes, a coyote cut across the highway in front of us and disappeared in the brush by the side of the road.

Then through the irrigated district around Brooks; on into

another dryland farming and ranching area where we stopped in a beautiful grove of trees and enjoyed our lunch. More tractless prairie and then on into the irrigated and dryland farming area in the more parkland district that stretches from east of Bassano to Calgary. In the midst of this excellent farming country, at Bassano campsite, we stopped for a rest. Then at Willson's Service farther on we stopped for coffee.

At Calgary, we stopped for gas, then on into the foothills of the Canadian Rockies. Here the coloring of the different kinds of trees was beautiful. Added to this, were the reflections in the small lakes along the way plus the patches of grass turned to a golden yellow, making the whole panorama really something to remember.

We had supper at Scott's Lake Service in the midst of all this beauty. . . . How right the plaque in the Cafe is when it says — "since there is no place anywhere near this place like this place, this must be 'The Place'."

Night closed in on us here and we headed for the Rockies silhouetted against the fading light in the western sky. Rolling through the Indian Reservation we could see the lights of the Indian cabins dotting the night. Then in just a little while the mountains loomed stark and black all around us as our headlights seemed to carve a tunnel into the night. Off to the right the lights of Exshaw stood out against the mountain's base and cast shimmering reflections on the water of the lake.

The park gate — all lit up in an ocean of green. Then the last few miles to Banff; along the way is the power plant, if you stop and listen you can hear the incessant hum of the turbines as they unceasingly pour electricity into the power lines which spread like a spider web over plains and mountains.

While rounding a bend in the road, our lights played over a herd of magnificent elk, beautiful and silent against the backdrop of pines and mountains. Then our lights swept on into the night. Next, the traffic circle, a few more rods, the neon lights of the Belle Plaza Motel; our home for the night.

**October 7th, 1966**

It rained last night washing the tourist smell out of the mountains. Now the broken clouds are drifting down the valley half mast to the snow capped peaks, and in places, a mountain will get in the way of their line of travel and the fluffy white down will go shooting upwards far into the blue above, and on a morning like

this when you go 'back of beyond' away from man to where God's great hand has arranged the things of His beauty so that even man can understand them, how can anyone say, "God is dead"? I have seen such vivid beauty that a man must take a portion of it unto himself, giving him an understanding of the deeper things in life, bestowing on him the ability to feel not only for himself, but also to feel for others. And one realizes that beauty is the poetry of God; that God does not write His poetry on paper nor parchment but on sky and sea and land and man.

We are driving up the Bow Valley; the massive peaks and glaciers of the Rockies to our left, and the Bow River to our right, and beyond the river, Mt. Eisenhower against a backdrop of snow covered mountains in the distance.

Oh! Oh! Here's a herd of elk crossing the highway — took slides and movies — one old bull elk even posed for us. Then he met me eye to eye and nose to nose, trying to figure out how come I walk on my hind legs and stick my front feet out in front of me. I don't know whether or not he figured out what makes me tick, but he sure enough gave me the once over.

On up the valley to Lake Louise Station. By now it was about time to eat and, I thought I was hungry, so, entering a cafe I delved into the menu and the first item — ah! Salmon steak! Oh! Oh! The price nearly floored me so I settled for a ham sandwich and a cup of tea, and I sure needed that cup of tea. From here, the final climb to the Great Divide. Then over the hump into British Columbia and we started the descent. A few miles farther on we heard a thunderous sound that echoed and re-echoed from valley wall to valley wall. Then through a break in the forest we saw three mighty diesels pulling the 'Canadian' as they thundered up the mountain side on their way to the Great Divide.

Farther on, the view point where you can see the trains disappear into the mountain into one of the spiral tunnels and emerge a few minutes later having gained or lost considerable altitude.

To watch the trains 'navigate' the spiral tunnels, especially if there are several trains doing it at the same time, is well worth watching.

Looking off to the north-west we can see for miles up the Yoho Valley. That is where the Takakkaw Falls seems to fall out of the sky and drop 1,248 feet into the Yoho River.

A little farther on is a road sign that reads, "hill," and it means, "Hill." Down, down, down to the gravel flats at Field

where the Kicking Horse River seems to lose itself amongst the rocks and gravel, reorganizing again before it plunges down through the Lower Kicking Horse Canyon to emerge into the wide and beautiful Columbia Valley. Along about here and a few hundred yards to the right is the Natural Bridge where the water foams and roars through a tunnel in the rock. There is a steel bridge for safety, but you can walk right across the river on the rock — the "Natural Bridge." Then on through the canyon where the road is hacked out of the side of the mountain and the world seems to be as far below you as the mountain tops above.

At Golden, we gassed up, had supper, and found a cute little Swiss type cabin to spend the night. The cabin seemed to impart some of the friendliness, serenity and neutrality of the country it represents.

**October 8th, 1966**

10:20 A.M. Here we are headed for the Roger's Pass: The Columbia River to our left is meandering back and forth across the valley, sometimes splitting up into several streams to unite again into a single channel as it rushes on towards the sea. By this time we have turned left and started the ascent to the summit. Up, up, up, almost continually up. There is a terrible blizzard releasing its fury amongst the high peaks above as we climb steadily towards the storm, approaching it from below. On through the snow sheds and past the perpetual snowdrifts on our left which have gathered and laid for centuries in the great crevices. Then the final climb to the summit; the temperature falls rapidly; the wind increases and we find ourselves in the midst of the blizzard which we had watched from far below. The storm is above us, around us and below us. The anger of nature tore at us from all directions, even from below as the subdued part of the storm tore upward out of the valley to find release and freedom as it spent its wrath in the cold silent peaks above.

The first time we passed this way there was just the Quadruped. On its wall is a bronze plaque for each Canadian Province, also the names of the people who were in any way responsible for the building of the highway. Now there is an ultra modern chalet, a large modern Shell Service Station, and headquarters for the department of highways and, the forestry headquarters.

A few more miles and we find ourselves dropping in great steps to the warmer quieter valley below. We stop and look back and up and watch the storm and mountain peaks in their eternal

battle — the storms will not give up, the peaks will not surrender, so the awe inspiring battle of nature goes on forever.

Then miles and miles of Autumn color, one spot ever brighter and more beautiful than the last. We have cameras to capture this array of art that Autumn puts on for any who are fortunate enough to pass this way. But we are undecided what to take and pass on through the valley with just our memories of a lovely drive.

At Revelstoke we meet and cross the Columbia River again after its 200 mile sojourn through the B.C. wilderness. The valley again becomes narrower, the foliage changes to a softer tone, sumak adds a confusion of red to the already brilliant forest, and there now is a kind of fern that comes in a myriad of colors and fills the open spaces between the trees. Then comes Three Valleys Gap and dinner. Here there is a museum, a collection of ancient cars, replica of a frontier town and coffee strong enough to poison a burro. Ida said, "that's the stuff that conquered the frontier," and I replied, "I don't know about that, but it sure came close to conquering me." The second cup was one half water and I still had to fight it awhile before I could drink it.

Then on through the mountain valleys resplendent in their autumn glory — Sicamous — then south through the valley of the Shuswap; past Mara Lake, a livid pool of myriad shades of blue, starting at almost black at the foot of the mountain at the far edge of the lake, changing through a dozen shades to skyblue at our feet where the water laps quietly against the road. And as the sun sank low over the mountains to the west, its slanting rays set the whole mountain side behind us aflame. It is times like this when your camera can capture permanently the glory of nature's handiwork.

A few more miles through the upper valley of the Shuswap and we enter the northern end of the Okanagan Valley. Through the city of Armstrong, then out to "Mom's." Dad has now passed on and lies quietly waiting for mom beneath a native pine.

We feel quite at home amongst these older folks, two thirds of them, from the prairies. In the hungry thirties they moved from the dusty prairies to the green mountain valleys and started all over again. But they still have lingering memories of the wonderful sunsets on the prairies and fond memories of the people to whom it was so hard to say good-bye. But they have lived their remaining active lives here and have chosen to spend their twilight years in this land they learned to love.

The younger generation, some small children when they

came, others born here, have taken over from their parents, and although they are of a different generation, they have inherited deeply the warm friendliness and hospitality that their parents brought over the mountains years ago. Many of our old prairie friends live in this valley of fruit and forests and are part of our reason for spending so much time here.

**October 12th, 1966**

Time to start for home: as we climb towards the summit the snow grows ever thicker as it comes down in sheet, blankets and busted feather pillows, and as day fades into evening, elk and deer stand out dark and beautiful against the snow; coyotes and the odd fox scurry across the road and disappear into the dripping forest. Down into the Columbia Valley and then up, ever up to the Great Divide. Night is closing in; the temperature is falling; winter, white and silent seems close at hand as we drop down into the quietness of the Bow Valley. Here the snow has transformed the valley into a winter wonderland. The clouds have closed in, shutting out the mountains above the trees, creating a depressed silence in which the elk, deer and other animals of the forest are quietly waiting for winter.

Now on to Banff: as we approach, the lights twinkle like stars in the milky way caused by the background of snow which in the darkening gloom lies like a ghostly shroud over the landscape.

Banff — the motel — a night's rest — Calgary — Medicine Hat and then home.

**About 1967**

## Where There's a Will There's a Way

For a few years after we retired and left the ranch to live in Irvine, my brother Horace and his son Wayne ran the ranch.

But the time came when, because of his worsening arthritis, it was impossible for Horace to get on to a saddle horse in the conventional manner, but he's not a guy to give up easily — he said, "I'll fix that." So saying, he went and bought "Old Shorty," a very reliable saddle horse and so uncomplicated that it was impossible to excite or otherwise disturb his reliable easy-going nature in any way.

The procedure followed was really something: First off, Shorty was saddled and bridled. Then led out into the yard where he quietly stood while Horace leaned a short stepladder against his side, climbed the ladder, settled aboard Shorty and then carrying the ladder, he rode Shorty over to the barn and stood it against the

building where it could be easily retrieved. For dismounting, the procedure then being reversed.

**The forty years before 1968**

## To Whom It May Concern

Dear folks —

I'm a Dodge; "Uncle Dodge" they call me now, but let's start at the beginning. It was back in 1928 that I rolled off the assembly line at the Dodge factory in Windsor, Ontario. My predecessors had established an enviable record of dependability and durability which, I must uphold, even surpass and raise to a higher standard if I could. And right then and there, I resolved to be a good car. I was a good car with all my ruggedness and power, but what I mean is, live a good life.

So when I was shiny new, they put me in a crate and shipped me on a train. At that time, I didn't know where I was going; I couldn't see very much but my motor intuition told me that there were other cars about and that we for days were rolling westward. Finally we pulled into a lovely western city and were put on the siding at the loading platform (unloading platform in this case). So here we were at the end of our train journey which was pleasant enough, but not like getting out and going places on your own.

Then on a lovely autumn morning we heard voices, and several men were walking amongst our crates. I heard one man close to me say, "hey Milt, here's that Dodge you ordered." Then the men went to work taking off our crates, and behold, who do you suppose were in the other crates around me? Non other than Fords, shiny new and ready to go. I had heard that they were very distant relatives of mine, but I'm telling you, that wasn't anything to be ashamed of.

Next we were towed through the streets of that lovely city to the old Central Garage where we were put on display. "So this is Medicine Hat," said a Ford to my right. "I like it here, I think I'll stay." And it did. For it's not so long ago that we passed the time of day as we basked in the sun at the curb in the business section of down town Medicine Hat. But that's getting ahead of my story.

Let's go back to when we were on display. It was a few days after we had arrived that a man and his son came to look at we cars. From the first they seemed to be attracted to me and I might say, me to them. Finally they walked over to me and one of them said, "This is something like it." Then Milt, turned up, he always turned up when people were looking us over and did the talking for

us. Well, maybe he laid it on a little thick, but I was young and strong and resolved right then to live up to his very high representation of me. Within a few minutes they said they thought they would take me. And was I glad! But Milt knew his stuff. They had to go somewhere in a hurry, so he lent them one of my slightly older brothers and that settled it. Nothing else would do; it was me right then or else. They were told to come and pick me up at six o'clock and I would be ready. So at six o'clock on the dot, the son whom I had seen, and his older brother, called for me; and was I proud. They got in and sat down on my luxurious cushions. The attendant came over and gave last minute instruction. Then my new driver set my choke, turned on my ignition and pulled my starter — there was a muffled whir-r and my mighty motor was idling quietly beneath my sleek bonnet. I gave a couple of quiet rumbles and then murmured out into the street. This was life! Moving along under my own power and taking my new owners wherever they wished to go. So my real life really began at six o'clock P.M. on Oct. 18th, 1928. This rolling almost silently through the streets and country side, being admired by all who saw me was great, but I had many more happy moments to come, had I known it, happy days and years. The next event in my life was meeting the rest of the family. And I mustn't forget the grand old car whose place I was to take. It was an old veteran of many miles and storms; a real he-man of a machine who had given flawless service for many many years. Mechanically, it was still perfect, but through no fault of its own, was unable to give the comfort that I had to offer. You see, I was a sedan, and it was built before sedans were thought of. But for years, it helped out in warmer weather, doing many of the rougher and shorter trips. Finally the younger son made it into a speedster, and it was kind of nice to stay at home and, well, do whatever it is that a car does, and to hear it roar out of the yard and flash over the hills to return later with a deep throated roar that split the night — then all would settle down to silence. Some time later it was sold to another young man, and I think I missed it as much as the rest of the family did. Especially I missed the times I spent listening to the voice of experience as it related events in its life to me as I am now relating events in my life to you. The old Gray Dart was gone — and the whole responsibility of transportation fell onto me. So with pleasant memories of an old car and its job well done, I took on my job alone. Things weren't very exciting for awhile — then — Oh yes, I remember now. One day I took the older son to Lethbridge, and we stayed there and

thereabouts for some time, and when we left, I was thoroughly convinced that we would return again and often, and we did. Between times I did such things as pulling sleighs for the young folks, going to dances, to shows, to town, etc.; that was pleasant and rewarding. Then came one of my great days. The elder son made some hasty preparations, said good-bye to the folks and away we went — to Lethbridge again. Again it was the same place, the same girl — but things seemed different — after all the goings and comings, the two young folks settled down in my deluxe comfort and we headed into the sunset. Far away to the west I could see the Rockies, and as we glided along through the summer evening I realized that I was on a honey-moon (not mine — their's). Their first and last but not my last, but that will come later. So we were away on a honey-moon; something I will never forget. Of course, I, was kind of out of it, but it was the first time I was going to the mountains, and there would be plenty for me to see. After a couple of hours out of Lethbridge we rolled into the Rockies; Lunbreck Falls, Frank Slide, British Columbia, Idaho, Washington, Helena, Montana — all over everywhere — mountains, fruit orchards, deserts, forests, glaciers, lakes and after many miles of travel, a lot of it up in the clouds, we returned home, and I murmured into the yard as quietly as I had rolled out of the Central Garage some ten thousand miles before. By the way — I forgot to tell you where I live. Well, I live on a ranch about thirty miles east of Medicine Hat, Alberta. And I might add here, that this episode covers the years Oct. 1928 to July, 1968, and, with some three hundred thousand miles behind me and still going strong and a half interest in me given by my former owner to Lawrence Verhegge, formerly of Irvine, Alberta, I am now going to Calgary to join an antique auto club. "Pensioned off" as it were but not forgotten. But let's go back to my life on the old ranch. Life again became normal for awhile.

Then one day in the fall of 1929, the younger son took me to town, filled up my gas tank, changed my oil, greased me inside and out and gave me a going over like I had never had before. So I says to myself, "now what's cooking?" But the answer was not long in coming. I was polished and swept and dusted. Then came suitcases, coats, etc. Then came the family; father, mother, daughter and the younger son. The elder son and his young bride stayed home to run the ranch.

I was away again. By this time my speedometer showed some fourteen thousand miles, but I knew it would show a lot more

before I returned. So down the highways and byways we sped; it was the mountains, the prairie, the north, the south and after visiting one hundred twenty-six towns and cities and plowing through mud and snow on roads deemed impassable, we arrived home, mud to my headlights and snow nearly to my door handles — we were, maybe, all a bit tired, but happy.

The following years were delightful enough, but quite normal except that my speedometer had risen many more thousands of miles; much more than ordinary. You see — I was serving two families, and oh boy, did they ever go places.

Then came another girl, a friend of the younger son. She did not go along on the next trip but he wrote a sketch of our trip for her, and I will try to give you a brief account from that, a little later.

But first, we must not forget that girl. She lived four miles up the valley from the ranch, and my speedometer stacked up many more miles travelling that road; the distance wasn't far but, the trips were many. During all that time I had made more trips to Lethbridge and surrounding country than I could count on my spokes. You see, the elder son's wife's folks lived up there.

And now for a brief account of that trip I mentioned earlier: On June the eighth, 1937, the younger son loaded me up with camping equipment, etc. Then we pulled out for Medicine Hat — if this was not going to be a honey-moon, what was it going to be? The answer — we picked up his chum in Medicine Hat and fastening his chum's motorcycle on a stand attached to my rear bumpers, and some more equipment, we were off. This time for a summer's vacation in the Rockies. And did we have fun, just the four of us. The two boys, and the motorcycle and I. I made the long hauls straight ahead and the motorcycle made the side runs; I didn't go on those, but I heard pretty well what happened. And I'm telling you a lot can happen when two boys a motorcycle and a car go places together. We roamed all over the mountains, we picked cherries, we boated, nearly drowned ourselves, made friends, wandered down the forest isles and finally ended up at home about three months later with my speedometer nearing the one hundred thousand mark.

Around about this time I made many, will we call them mercy trips? Some in a hurry, other not so hurried but they all ended up at some hospital. And, whenever someone had to be taken some where in a hurry or over difficult roads, I was usually called on to do the job. You can imagine the roads and the nights that I plowed through; but we always made it.

In the late spring of 1938 I was given a short rest if, being all in pieces can be called that. My motor was removed and sent away to a machine shop. My brakes were checked for the first time in my life; my steering gone over; new spring bushings installed; a new set of breaker points for my electrical system and then a good greasing up. My motor came back rebored with new pistons and rings installed and valves ground, and when I was all put back together again, I felt ten years younger.

Then once again we started for that little white home up the valley. There already, was camping equipment and suitcases packed in my back seat. So we picked up the young lady and more equipment, said good-bye to the folks and were away again. At Medicine Hat we called at the courthouse and I became suspicious. Then we rolled on to Lethbridge, Alberta. And on July 10, 1938, when I saw Rev. Robert Taylor drive into the yard, I knew I was due for another honey-moon. And so I was — on the twelfth of July, 1938, we, "the young son, his young bride and I" headed for the Rockies.

There is a complete account leading up to this very special event and, of their lives afterwards leading into the first years of their retirement. You'll also remember when they and I parted company in July, 1968. They went on into the years of a beautiful twilight, and I to a new home, an antique car club, semi-retirement, and a new life.

The following is that account of her life from 1915 to 1938, and their lives from then on, written by someone who knew her well.

Let's go back to 1915 to a little prairie town in southern Alberta: There was born one winter night, a little red headed girl. Her family was poor and times were hard; there was a large family, but in spite of all that she grew fat and freckled.

Her early years were spent on the family farm playing with her brother and sisters. And many were the times, when mother and small children sitting in the kind of quiet which comes only to the prairies when day is done, when the night was rent by the weird and fearful cry of a coyote just beyond the gloom. Or the rustle of cattle grazing and moving about out there in the night; or the silence of the night broken by a distant rumble, which grew to a roar, as a bunch of half wild horses passed by in the darkness. Then the roar dying away to a rumble again as the scores of pounding hoofs seemed to pass on into eternity — then silence.

In those days fences were few, and half wild cattle were

roaming the prairie. Many are the times when the family was forced into the house by fear of those cattle, or from real danger.

Many of those days and nights father was away working, trying to earn enough money to feed and clothe his family and buy sufficient equipment to go into farming full time.

Let's go back again to the beginning. In those years the family were just starting out on the farm. Materials were scarce and money scarcer. So they set to work with what was at hand; sod and stone and built (a monument of the past) — "a sod house." But this was no ordinary sod house. It housed a very energetic and resourceful family. As the family grew so did the home (and it was a real home) more rooms, more windows, more plants, more plaster and more polishing, until it became a lovely cosy white washed cottage; scrubbed and polished to within an inch of its life. It was nestled in a little oasis of poplar, willow, caragana and small fruit trees, persuaded to grow in a vast treeless semiarid wilderness, not by green thumbs but by stout arms green to the elbows.

To come upon this tree surrounded home amidst dry parched rolling hills was startling, unusual and mystifying as the wonder of the Cypress Hills splashed across the dry arid ranch land of southern Alberta.

By this time the little red headed girl had grown into a little lady of six. This meant school, and each morning, carrying her little lunch pail, accompanied by her sister and brother, set out on a two and a half mile walk or "run" to school.

School to her was much the same as to other children. Ups and downs — mostly downs — but she worked hard and graduated from public school with honors at an early age. Then she was needed at home to help with the work required to support a large family — so the end of school for her.

In the years that followed she worked hard and long in the interest of the farm and family. This was during the hungry 30's and the only activities to take part in were work, baseball and dances. And it took a very resourceful person to live a full and useful life. But somehow she did, and grew into a lovely young lady of nineteen. Through correspondents, through reading and a relentless effort to better her lot, she realized that there was a great deal more to life than the limited opportunities that existed on a lonely prairie farm.

About this time she met a screw ball that seemed to do most things differently; talked about far away places, travel, education

and culture. These things seemed as though they would give a new meaning to life, and she found that they did.

The relationship between her and this young man was really never a friendship. It was a deep understanding of each other's problems, brought on by a society of a cruel world, which had left disillusionment and doubt in its wake. And for a long time each seemed to distrust not each other but themselves.

In time this passed away and their relationship grew into the most beautiful courtship possible. Then it was agreed that each would more or less go his separate way; associating with different people; mixing with other young people and living separate lives in an attempt to be certain of their feelings toward each other. The following is a poem he wrote for her:

**If we drift apart**

In the days before you knew me,
Then, and now, and evermore
You will have my fond devotion
Till this span of life is O'er.
If your friends are prone to leave you
When this birthday's far behind,
Please remember, if you need me,
I will not be hard to find.
When your golden hair has faded
In the twilight of your life,
May you be both safe and happy
Far from troubles, cares and strife.
When your hair has turned to silver
And your steps are soft and slow,
Remember — I will grow old with you;
My hair too will turn to snow.
Through the years I will remember
All those days that used to be.
And when your life is fading, Sweetheart,
Please Old Pal, remember me?

They kept in touch by correspondence and infrequent visits. Some visits being as long as eighteen months apart — but all this abuse of their relationship failed to destroy it — in fact, it grew ever stronger. During those years they became engaged and planned their future. Money was scarce in those years, and even though they both worked and saved, it took a long time to save enough money to start a home. (Top wages for domestic help were $15.00 per month and board.) (Farm worker's top wages were

$35.00 per month and board.) And those were the only types of employment available at that time. And you continued in employment only as you were recommended by one employer to another.

Finally the great day arrived and she was a lovely bride at a lovely wedding; surrounded by many well wishers who were sincere in their congratulations and hopes for her.

After the wedding, she and her husband left on a never to be forgotten honeymoon and as the day waned, they drove into the sunset, into the mountains, into the night and into a marriage which has known no quarrels, no resentments and no regrets.

Their honey-moon lasted most of the summer and took them to cities, to summer resorts, and to many out of the way places such as unnamed lakes, old logging trails, animal paths through mountain valleys and at times up near the timber line where they could look down on the wonderful panorama of the beautiful valleys below. And to this day, some of their fondest memories are of the times when they were back of beyond, two people in love, alone, in the wilderness of God's great out of doors.

Then back to civilization — and the honey-moon was ended (or was it?). It seems it has lasted all through the years; through a marriage which will be cherished 'til death do them part.

To this marriage were born two lovely girls; under their mother's guidance they grew up without any teenage problems; graduated from high school with honors, attended colleges and Universities and are still seeking after knowledge. On the way up they won many scholarships and burseries — also grants — borrowed money to pay for their education; worked and paid it back. This self-sufficiency and determination was the result of their mother's guidance and I have heard many people say, "I hope my children grow up to be like hers." And in doing all this she never neglected her husband, her duties, or her friends.

Don't suppose that life for her was always a bed of roses for her health has always been a problem, and many have been her misfortunes and disappointments, but she never let them interfere with her relationships with other people, and her disposition, if possible, has improved over the years.

Now the main battle is over. Their two girls have grown and are away on their own. She and her husband have gained financial security and have gone forth hand in hand into retirement.

But life has not ended there. With continued study, reading and an understanding of other people's problems; through travel and contact with all kinds of peoples and circumstances, and

experience in how the rest of the world lives, she has accumulated a vast store of knowledge. And although she has never obtained a university degree in any of the arts, I sincerely believe she has earned a degree in the "Art of Living."

The other day I had a chance to listen in and take part in her reminiscing of the past and, also of more recent times. It went something like this: I remember when I was a little girl, the terrible blizzards on the open prairie, the deep snow, the cold and the impassable roads, I remember the old sod house that was warm and comfortable, almost covered with snow, nestled among the sheltering trees. The old ice-house, the old wind driven grinder built by dad to grind corn, wheat, etc. to make porridge, to make meal to mix with white flour for making bread and to grind chop for the stock. She also told of the time her mom was delayed in making chokecherry syrup or jelly and it went wild and she threw it out to the chickens and ducks. Well, they became the highest land locked birds in all creation; staggering, falling and lying all over the yard, drunker than all get out. She told of the continual fight her mother waged with nature. It seems the old sod house was complete with its full compliment of mice; with tree roots growing through the walls and the roof wishing to take off in high winds because it was impossible to fasten it securely to the sod walls. The roots were taken care of by chopping them off in the wall and plastering up the holes. The mice holes were plugged with broken glass and plastered over, but even this was not completely successful. And the roof — well — a few big rocks strategically placed, normally did the job. But when the winds got really bad, scrap iron, posts and even the harrows were called into service to hold it down.

Then there were the gay Christmases; the warm fellowship of Easter; friends and neighbors dropping in, but mostly family affairs. "You know, these things aren't the same anymore."

Then she spoke of the days when mom and dad started to turn grey and the remaining members of the family drifted away. Finally mom and dad moved away and here I am the only one left on the old stamping ground. Our family too has grown and gone, but I still have my husband and my memories.

And a few of my more recent memories: Not so long ago we were out on the old ranch (we don't live there any more), and the ones who run it were away. "**But in memory I now am out there**." It's quiet now, out here, and as I drift over the years in memory, I see the many rivulets of water rushing down the valleys

in spring, forming sparkling silver streams on their way to join the creeks which in turn fill the sloughs and dams. I remember watching for the first crocuses to burst forth; and many happy hours the girls and I spent tramping over the hills picking flowers.

I still see the scores of little white heads dotting the hills and valleys as the young hereford calves sun themselves in the spring sunshine. The girls coming home from school — I still remember with a twinge of sadness and pride when they graduated from high school with honors and went on to University on scholarships, grants, and bursaries. The walks my husband and I took among the hills and valleys which were so good to us.

And now to some of the sadder memories: During those years we had saddle horses worth their weight in gold — too valuable to part with, too faithful to destroy, and after their useful days were over, they were turned loose in a beautiful little field with luscious grass, sparkling water, big trees and bushes for shade and shelter and lived their twilight years in peace and quiet. But this could not go on forever, and so the end came.

Then there were our other pets; dogs and cats, well trained, almost human in many ways — their devotion and usefulness will never be forgotten — their little traits and habits imprinted on our hearts forever. They too all passed over the great divide and all that remains are the little graves that lie in the shade of the trees that live on.

The other day I was out on the old ranch again, and surrounded by all my memories there seems to be only one other memory left to relate, that is of the old house which had been our home for so many years — years of joy, sorrow, love, disappointments and accomplishments — a place like that grows to be part of one's very being. And it was with sadness, and a fond farewell to all we had known and felt and loved and remembered, that we for the last time quietly closed the door on our old home, reluctantly turned our backs on our life's work, our little friends resting in peace amongst the hills they loved so well; and leaving a little of ourselves to share their peace and quiet, drove off into the prairie night and a new life.

You may ask, "how come you know her so well?" "You see, I am her husband."

Tom Wood

1968

## The Question: Did They Win?

Two friends of mine who are known to not give up easily, were streaking down the hi-way at a terrific speed. The reason: one fellow wished to be in time to visit his wife in the maternity hospital before visiting hours were over, and then to go curling. "Oh oh! Here comes the Bubble Gum Machine (hi-way patrol car) right on our tail," said the friend who was driving, "we've had it, we'll be too late to get into the hospital." The other friend, climbing into the back seat of the car and pulling an overcoat over himself said, "Stop and tell the cops that you're rushing me to the hospital, and I'll moan like I haven't much time left in this old world." This done, the police said, "follow us — we'll run pilot interference for you — and with red light flashing and siren whining, away they went down the hi-way at eighty plus miles per hour. The police piloted them right up to the emergency entrance at the hospital and then left — that's when the fun began. Two orderlies rushed out with a stretcher, dumped the "very sick man" on to it and away. In no time at all he was in the emergency ward and two nurses were taking off his clothes when he hollered, "there's nothing the matter with me; get the heck out of here!" "Okay," they said, "but there will be a small charge for the two orderlies, the emergency ward and two nurses. That will be twenty-four dollars and fifty cents." And even though their speeding ticket would have cost them only fourteen dollars and fifty cents, they still think they got a good deal by outsmarting the police. I still think the joke was on them, and the police set it all up by radio.

1970

## The Bear That Took Up Housekeeping Next To Us

In the summer of 1970, my wife Ida, and I, with our old Pontiac and trailer set out for we knew not where. But after wandering around for a few weeks we landed up in Whistlers Mountain Campsite at Jasper, Alberta. Before heading farther west into the mountains we met a lot of wonderful people — but we met one wonderful fellow that was the highlight of our trip — a big black bear that took up residence in the trailer space right next to ours.

I guess he felt a certain amount of security because his and our trailer spaces went right back to the edge of the heavy forest. And being some brush around where we were, he wasn't easily

seen by the other campers. So he just sat there sunning himself and watching people move about in the camp. He didn't seem to mind us in the least and we certainly didn't mind him. But it seemed as though he didn't like his picture taken, because at the first sight of a camera he would amble off into the forest. Us thinking it rather unusual to have a bear for a neighbor, mentioned it to the girl at the camp ground gate. We said, "if it's of any interest to you, we have a big black bear living in the trailer space right next to us." Her reply, "Oh, that's alright, he's a permanent resident here during the summer and one of our best tourists — he's **one tourist** we don't have any trouble with."

*Wells Grey Park: Sue, bears, kids and dogs*

After saying good-bye to our black furry friend (the bear in the next trailer space) we left Whistlers Mountain Camp site and headed west on the Yellowhead Hi-way, turned south onto the South Yellowhead, then turned right into Wells Grey Park. There's a whole lot that I could write about that area, but a lot of it would verge on being dry history and that, unsuccessful as I might be, is what I'm trying to avoid, so I'll just recall a couple of instances. As we approached the park entrance, the girl attendant, while we were still a short distance from the park gate called out, "Hello Mr. and Mrs. Wood, How are you?" To us, not knowingly knowing anyone for a hundred miles or more in any direction it was a pleasant surprise; a lovely young girl we knew, away back here from civilization. But if you knew the family, you could pretty well guess who it might be; the now grown daughter of Ralph and Clara Ritcey whom we had gotten to know in Kamloops when visiting her parents years ago. We spent a couple of very pleasant hours with her and then drove on into the wilderness park.

The country is wild and beautiful and full of bears. They are everywhere; they literally clutter up the place.

We pulled into a campsite that the work crew were still developing. The campers had already moved in — so had the bears. (Young ones I think, not yet having learned to fear man.) Anyway, I never saw such a conglomeration of creatures or heard such a noisy campground in all my life. The parents were hollering at their kids, the kids were hollering at their dogs, the dogs were barking at the bears, the bears were adding to the racket by upsetting garbage cans and trying to open the workmen's lunch buckets, and the workmen were hollering while running the bears off into the forest. I was watching three men do something, I don't remember what it was, but one man stopped working and said to

me, "Look behind you." There was his lunch bucket about three feet away and a bear sneaking up behind me, evidently intent on grabbing it or me, and then taking off into the bush. I was about to take off when the man said, "That's alright, he doesn't want you, he wants my lunch bucket." Then proceeded to chase the bear off into the forest with no more concern than I would run a steer out of a corn field. It seemed to be a hopeless proposition, because as soon as the men quit chasing those rascals, they stopped, turned around and followed them right back into the campsite.

**fall of 1972**

## At Gunnison, Utah

While rolling south on our way to Arizona, we were fortunate in stopping at Gunnison, Utah. That night we picked a likely looking motel. And when I asked how much per day, the matronly lady said, "$9.00" — Quite surprised I asked, "Why so low?" Her answer, "I make a good living at that so why should I charge any more?" It was a lovely place with T.V., thick wall to wall carpet and all the trimmings including a telephone.

The next move was to find supper. Our hostess directed us to a restaurant a couple of blocks down the street. "The best," she said. She was right — good wholesome meals just like mother used to make — the waitresses were neat, quiet and friendly; it was almost like a home coming. After a couple of meals there, my curiosity got the better of me. There was on the side of each low booth just below the music selection box, an apparent old fashioned bell button. I asked, "A button to call for service?" The friendly waitress said, "Yes." My reply, "I was sure tempted to press it." She said, "it wouldn't have mattered, as we had to disconnect them because the kids just couldn't leave them alone." They also had those big old fashioned fans hanging from the ceiling. And the homey atmosphere was further enhanced by beautiful plants growing amongst the surroundings.

**1972-73**

## A Pilot in the Cream Corn Business

A new friend we made while wintering in Arizona told us of the following experience: He was flying a light plane and was doing alright, but would have to wait for two years before he would be old enough to get his private pilot's license.

He was flying near the airport one day when the wind suddenly changed. Him, not yet having had enough experience with those conditions, just about everything went wrong. Up to

then he thought he was the whole cheese, but soon realized that he wasn't even a seasoned cheese, much less a seasoned pilot.

He said, "That right about then he missed the airfield, and landed in a field of corn owned by a negro farmer nearby. Right then I was in business and picked, shucked and shelled more corn in almost no time flat than a crew of pickers could have done in half a day. Next, the owner of the field showed up and proceeded to give his opinion of this crazy young pilot."

Our friend, John Preston, being young and having a very high opinion of himself, nonchalantly said, "What are you griping about? I've picked, shucked and shelled more corn for you in less than three minutes than your crew could in half a day." (The corn still being soft in the cob was not only picked, shucked and shelled but was creamed to boot.) He said, "He had never before or since seen so much creamed corn in his life; it was all over everything and everywhere. But, the funniest thing was, that, when the negro farmer who was very black, resurveyed the damage, and remembered what this young punk had said, he really blew his top, and his face actually turned a bright red." John said, "That is one thing I've never seen before nor since — a red negro."

**1973**

## The Guy Who Starts Building From Anywhere

When at Quartzsite, Arizona, in the spring of 1973, I was having an interesting conversation with a local girl. It finally got around to buildings. A little later she was expounding on how her husband had built this building from the ground up. Just to be a little difficult, I asked, "There isn't anywhere else you can start to build a building from is there?" "He one time built the roof of a large shed first, and then put the rest of it together from there — you just don't know my husband."

**1973**

## Bill Tohm formerly of Irvine, Alberta

Bill Tohm was a farmer and a friend, and a neighbor of mine. But **his** real friend was his Saxophone.

He was an exceptional musician, and I well remember the many times we played together . . . Years later, his surrounding neighbors near his new home at Didsbury, Alberta recognized and appreciated his great love for music and his willingness to play for any occasion. Bill and his Saxophone were synonymous; when you found one, you knew the other was not far away.

At an early age his health failed, and he went to the hospital. I

do not know where his old Saxophone was, but the nurses and staff appreciating both his amiable personality and his love of music, (having heard him play many times) bought him a Saxophone. This he played in the hospital on many occasions until it came time for him to "go". His friends both in and out of the hospital, so appreciated him, his Sax. and his playing, that they buried his Saxophone with him. And together, silent at last, they slipped over the Great Divide into Eternity.

. . . Bill Tohm passed away in October, 1973 . . . Buried at Didsbury, Alta.

**1973**

## The Power of Suggestion

"Sunset Point" said to be the nicest rest stop in the whole of Arizona is situated on the south edge of the upper desert about fifty miles north of Phoenix. We often stopped there to relax whenever we passed that way. It overlooks a vast valley and you can see for miles and miles. With binoculars, you can pick out several ranches along the valley floor and numerous abandoned mines on the side of the mountain on the other side of the valley.

The rest stop is built out to the edge of the valley, and there was a sign that read, "Danger, don't go beyond this point." Of course, that's just what almost everyone goes beyond. So someone in charge of the rest stop finally got fed up and changed the sign. I happened to be standing nearby when a girl of about seventeen came tearing down the slope and jumped over the stone wall intent on going into the forbidden area, but just as she was airbound passing the changed sign, she caught the words, "Snakes beyond this point." She appeared to change direction in midair; tore back up the slope and cleared the stone wall jumping uphill.

It's too bad all our "keep off" and "keep out" signs can't be as effective. People deliberately ignore them. Another day a car stopped directly in front of a sign that read, "Dogs must be on leash," turned their mutt loose and were wandering off when the attendant caught up with them; he pointed three times, once at the dog, once at the sign, and once at the car. And he meant just what he **didn't** say. It was very effective.

And at that rest stop, there was a large fenced in area where you could turn your dog loose for exercise.

**March 1973**

## Blondie And Our Toast at the Elite Café

On our sojourn to Arizona for the winter, we wandered over

to Dusty Hot Springs, Nevada. There we had our meals at a very popular and nice restaurant, and were fortunate to have as our waitress a lovely blonde girl. I was told that she had drifted into town in the last stage of desperation, but luckily was befriended by a man in his sixties. He treated her according to the gentleman that he is, seeing to it that she had the necessities of life and someone to turn to in her time of need, and asked no favors for it.

In time she got a job as waitress in the **Elite Café** where she became greatly appreciated. But she is forever grateful to the man who saved her from a seemingly hopeless life. I was told that whenever he entered the Café, she met him at the door, kissed him quietly, escorted him to a seat and attended to his needs. And that people kidded him by saying, "You'll drown yourself coming in here all the time for coffee." Personally I don't blame the guy — "What a wonderful way to go."

Anyway, one morning she was getting us our breakfast and the other girls kept swiping our toast out of the toaster; she threatened to break the arm of any girl who did it again if she caught them. But she didn't catch them. Then two deputy sheriffs sat down near the toaster. She deputized them to guard our toast and they did just that. When she brought it she said, "Well, with a little help I made it."

The day we left, she told me she too was leaving that day. I was told a big hotel at the west coast had been watching her and had asked her to be overseer and hostess of their dining room for regular patrons, for banquets and for supplying meals for conventions. When asked not to leave she said, "I'm sorry. I like it here, but I can't turn down an opportunity like that." And so she was to leave.

That morning when I went in for coffee, there was a petition still lying on the counter, pages and pages of it. It was worded something like this: We, the undersigned, are asking **you**, Blondie (not her real name) to please stay with us. The first 35 names on the petition were of the complete management and staff, then other fellow workers such as supply people, etc. Then came those of patrons — all the names of people whose love and respect she had won by just being her own wonderful self.

I sometimes wonder if these people are spotted along life's way, just to restore our faith in our fellow men.

**Spring 1973**

## Somebody Swiped the Stove Control and Element

While wandering back home to Canada from Arizona in the

spring of 1973, we left via Las Vegas and then headed north. After going through The Crater of the Moon Monument and many other very interesting places, we stayed one night at Darby, Montana. The first thing we do on pulling into a place for the night is get a motel, or, hotel room. Anyway, at Darby we took a motel and then went up town for supper; had roast beef, mash potatoes, gravy and all the trimmings. What a meal! Later we returned to our motel. For some reason we needed hot water, but when we went to turn on the stove we found that the element and controls were missing. We told the owner. He took a look and said, "I'll be darned! We've had just about everything else stolen, but they have never taken our stoves apart and swiped pieces before." So he moved us into another unit for the night.

I'm still wondering what kind of people they must be to pull a trick like that.

**Winter 1972-73**

## One Meal A Day — and it's Her Turn to Eat

My wife Ida, eats three regular meals a day. I eat one big meal at noon and the other two are usually just lunches. It so happened that on one of our sojourns down south we stopped for supper at a nice little restaurant with a nice and concerned waitress. Ida ordered a regular meal — me, just a cup of coffee and a donut. The waitress asked, "What's the matter with you that you're not having anything more? Have a bowl of soup, a sandwich, or a piece of pie; anything, it will do you good." And was quite insistent. I appreciated her concern, but still wanted only a cup of coffee and a donut. So I said, "We've been away from home a long time, and our funds are getting low. We can only afford one single meal a day, and today, it's her turn to eat." By the smirk on her face I know she didn't believe me, but nevertheless, I got my coffee and donut without further ado.

**1973-74**

## They Didn't Get Away With It

Mr. Bill Hostettler of Black Canyon City, Arizona, ranched near Flagstaff, Arizona at the time of the first world war. He was the first man conscripted out of Flagstaff for the army, and three days after he got his draft notice he was on his way.

He owned a nice spread of 165 head of cattle, good pasture and always had a good supply of hay.

The man who ran the ranch for Bill while he was away, ran it to his own benefit, pocketing most of the profit.

When Bill came back, he found that the ranch had gone to pieces; the government had cancelled his leases and grazing permits, and the bigger ranchers had gobbled them up.

When he found out what had happened he was pretty "mad," and told the whole bunch including the government, "I'm giving you guys just twenty-four hours to start putting my place back together or I'll shoot the whole d--- bunch of you so and so's. It makes more sense for me to shoot guys like you, than to be over in Europe shooting 'heinies.' They were doing only what they were told to do." His warning was heeded pronto. The government recognizing the one man revolution and its justification, quickly restored all his permits and leases and he soon had every bit of his holdings back.

The surrounding ranchers' line of thinking had been: he'll get shot over there and won't be back, so each rancher grabbed as much of the land as he could, hoping to grab more than the next fellow.

A humorous incident that happened in England: Bill said, "after the war was over we were on review before the general while the parade ground was flooded with more than a foot of water. After a few soldiers had marched through, it became a quagmire almost two feet deep. The general got impatient because we were marching "eyes front" instead of "eyes right" as commanded. We had to, to keep our ranks while marching through all that mud. The general, not knowing better, rode into the mess to bawl us out and his horse got bogged down. In an effort to get out, it floundered around dumping him into the mud. He got his foot caught in the stirrup in the process and as he was dragged hither and yon, officers from all directions came a-running to help. We enlisted men hollered, "Oh, let him go, a mud bath will do him good." The old general was sure rough on us after that, but the laugh we had was well worth it.

At one time in his life, Bill rounded up 1500 head of unowned horses out of and around the Grand Canyon and shipped them to a receiver in southern Mexico to sell to the negros down there. Bill's comment: "I'll bet those negros had some real fast plow teams. I can imagine them following their walking plows with fifteen to twenty foot steps as they hung on to the handles. Yes sir! some of those broom tails were pretty snappy stuff."

Then there was the time he really got "took" on one of his horse trading trips to the Phoenix area in Arizona: He was trailing a large bunch of horses which he had for sale and to trade as he went

along. Just north of Phoenix, he spotted a horse in a yard that any man would be proud to own. He says to himself, "That horse just has to be mine." So he rode into the yard to see what he could do about acquiring that sleek, fat, beautiful horse. The owner said, "I see you admire my horse." "Sure do!" said Bill, "Wanna swap?" "O.K." said the old man, "give me one of your broom tails and he's yours." As I slapped my saddle on him I wondered what the old man would do with the half wild practically good-for-nothing broom tail I had given him in trade. So far so good. Then as I was putting on the bridle, Oh no! the beautiful horse didn't have a tooth in his head. I had been "taken" and "good", but I was still curious as to how a toothless horse could be so fat and sleek and apparently in his prime. I also wanted to know how a sharp horse trader like me had been "taken." I should have looked at his teeth first, that's normal procedure in any horse trade. But involving a horse that looked like it had everything I neglected to do so. So I asked, "how come?" The old man lead me over to a barrel at the corner of the barn — I looked in — slop — ordinary slop like you feed to pigs.

Right then I started to complain: "I don't have a barrel to keep slop in, and anyways, how in heck am I going to pack a barrel full of slop on a saddle horse while I'm trailing horses?"

The old man said, "A deal is a deal and it was you who wanted to swap in the first place, and what about that old useless broom tail you swapped to me for him?" "Well," I said, "That's another thing altogether." Then the old man said, "That's a lesson for you, young man. Here, you take your useless old broom tail and I'll just keep my beautiful horse." Then we both laughed.

**1974**

**As told to me by Orley Waggoner (at) Black Canyon City, Arizona, U.S.A.**

## The Bear That Came to Camp and Nobody Stayed, Not Even the Bear

Orley, a friend of mine told me of the following experience he had while working on construction.

At the construction camp where he worked, a bear got into the dynamite. After eating several sticks (they say bears like dynamite) he strolled into the camp. Being a big fellow and in a bad mood, all hands left for what they considered a safe distance. Knowing that he had eaten the dynamite, everyone was doubly careful to avoid him. But one guy got carried away in the excite-

ment and before anyone could stop him, he grabbed a rifle and, "boom", he shot the bear. But that was only the little "boom" — the bear blew up and disappeared and most of the camp with him.

**Spring 1974**

## The Ram and The Creek — I Think I'll Try It

In passing — as told to me by Brown in Black Canyon City, Arizona:

A Dakota man had along with other things, a farm, three boys, a creek with a cutbank and a sheep buck whose idea of fun was to butt somebody. And so the stage was set. One of the boys would get down on all fours, lower his head and make like he wanted to fight. "Rufus" the ram, would take up the challenge, charging in at full speed. The boy would move sideways just in time, and Rufus would shoot out over the low cutbank into the creek. He evidently thought this was great fun as he was always ready to do it again and again. As the summer dragged on, their dad thought it was enough and told the boys to end that foolishness and to get the heck out of there. The boys wandered off, but kept an eye on things as their dad seemed to be quite interested in their goings on.

The "old man" said to himself, "that seems like fun; think I'll try it." By this time, Rufus was all set for another run through. So pa got down on his hands and knees, and Rufus had gotten himself all wound up and ready. But as pa put his head down to challenge the buck, he was poked in the face by a broken weed or something. Because of that, he threw back his head instead of moving sideways — Rufus got him dead centre and they both went over the cutbank into the creek.

The boys used to tell this on their dad, but he would never admit or deny it.

The following are excerpts from letters that I wrote to Nancy our dear friend in Arizona, during the illness of our wonderful daughter, Carol, and, after her passing.

June 10, 1976

Dear Nancy,

Received your very welcome letter this morning — thanks a million! Its coming certainly helped during these difficult times. A little while before, we had gotten a phone call concerning Carol and the new was not good . . .

Her condition is worsening — everything humanly possible

is being done, but unless a Divine Miracle happens soon, I'm afraid we have lost the battle. We are convinced the treatment is working but because of reasons beyond our control, the treatment wasn't started soon enough; will tell you about it some other time.

I'm sorry to write as I have done (and probably will do) but I just started to write and I guess one writes what is uppermost in one's mind. Please forgive me? But it helps to have someone to talk to at a time like this; and I know I can talk to **you**. We also have another wonderful friend, "Darlene", the girl I have told you about. We don't see her often, but when pressures build up to the breaking point I phone her. She's one of those people to talk to or to just be with her is a great help. . .

The last time we went to see Carol in her home and had said good-bye and were leaving, Norman, Carol's wonderful husband, called for me to wait a moment as Carol wanted to say something to me. In a moment he returned and said, "Carol wants me to wish you a happy 'father's day' for her." So I went back to her bedside and thanked her for her thoughtfulness. "What a girl!" Death just around the corner still she thought of me and my well being. A father's day wish I will always remember. . .

June 12, 1976

Dear Nancy,

This card to let you know how things are and also a little note to let you know that you are always in our thoughts.

Love Tom

P.S. We received your letter this morning. Thank you Nancy — T.N.W.

June 18, 1976

Dear Nancy,

On June the 15th we received an urgent phone call to come to the Medicine Hat hospital as Carol had hemorrhaged and was on her way to the hospital in the ambulance. Norman, when they called him at the plant by phone, borrowed the plant ambulance and driving it himself picked Carol up at their home in Burstall and headed for the hospital a distance of seventy miles. We were at the hospital before they arrived, and as I stood at the window watching, I could see the ambulance with all its lights flashing as it made its way through the traffic — a race with death.

We were all with Carol as life was fading fast. When the end was near we noticed that she wished to say something but was unable to speak, so someone handed her a cheque book and I gave

her my pencil, and on the plain cover of the cheque book she wrote just one word — 'Good-bye' — and in a little while she was gone.

Charmaine arrived in time for the funeral. . .

After the funeral I wrote the following on a card and sent it to Nancy:

**"A Father's Tribute to a Wonderful Daughter"** — Carol's life was a beautiful life; her funeral a beautiful sunset — but the sunset came too soon. Love Dad. . . That's all for now — Good-night Nancy

Love Tom

June 27, 1976

Dear Nancy,

When I sent you that first card on June 10 that Carol was near the end, I just didn't know how else to say what I had to, and I hope those few words said it adequately. . .

After the funeral I said to Norman (our son-in-law) that I was pleased Carol is buried on the hill overlooking the rest of the Cemetery — she would like that. Then Norman told me that if the law would have let him, he would have buried her amongst the hills where he knew she would like to be. Apparently there is somewhere overlooking the Saskatchewan River where they had spent many happy hours together. She has gone now, but gave Norman four wonderful children before she left. . .

Speaking of pain: the pain of those of us who are left can only be lessened by the passing of time and the knowing that others care. We thank God that Carol had no physical pain and was serene to the end. She left many very sad friends, but too, she left a beautiful memory.

July 24, 1976

Dear Nancy,

You know that we have the family's antique furniture from the turn of the century and before. Well, when the town felt they were unable to carry through with our museum plans, we started giving antiques away. Then the Harvey Freimarks who bought our ranch where we still spend a lot of time in the summer living in our old home, said, "instead of giving all those valuable antiques away, we'll help you, and let's build your old home back into what it was in the old days in the beginning of the century." They said, "You started with the lonely prairie and built it up to the ranch that we bought. We don't want the Wood Ranch nor the Wood name to be forgotten." So many of the antiques of the long ago are going

back to their old home, and Ida and I will spend part of each of our declining years amongst the old things we loved so well. Isobel (Mrs. Freimark) has asked me to also write a history of the ranch and the Wood family from the beginning. And they said, "When you are gone, we will put a lock on your old home and keep it and the history as a memorial to the Wood Ranch and the Wood family forever." They said, "It will be one of our most treasured possessions and we will be able to show visitors to the ranch its progress from the tractless prairie to what it is today."

**Later**: We brought Charmaine out here to the old ranch tonight; she is quite taken with her old home. Charmaine has an aptitude for writing (Carol had too). So Charmaine said, "When you are through with this place, please leave it to me? I'll do my writing out here." She is contemplating on going into writing full time. It is an ideal place for writing; the expanse of the hills and the prairie; the water shimmering in the moonlight; the trees; the many wild creatures coming down to the lakes to drink, and when the sun has set beyond the western horizon and taken the beautiful prairie sunset with it, the soft and friendly night silently brings in the prairie solitude. . .

Charmaine went walking alone tonight amongst the hills and valleys, for hours, like Carol and she used to do in times gone by. By the time she returned, the sun had long since set beyond the undulating skyline and the bright lights from our old home were casting their welcome glow far out over the peaceful prairie.

It is bitter sweet to remember the old days and, to remember your children growing up amongst the hills and valleys they and you loved so well. But now there is one missing, and the emptiness in our hearts was ten fold as Charmaine walked out of the silent night into the welcoming circle of light surrounding our old home, "alone".

**1977**

## Rocking Chair on the Freeway

In 1977 while living for the winter in a trailer park near Wickenburg, Arizona, one day sitting beside the freeway without too much on my mind, I saw something flash over the crest on the highway a short distance to the west. I knew what it was but couldn't believe it. You won't want to either. But there it was, a rocking chair sliding on its rockers right down the middle of the freeway clipping off a good fifty or so miles per hour. By the time it went passed me it had slowed to about forty miles per hour, but was

still moving pretty fast for a rocking chair without a driver. It went another couple of hundred feet down the declining road, turned sidewise, bounced a few times, rolled a few times then slid to a stop, suffering only a pulled arm and a few scratches.

Out there in the middle of the freeway was no place for an antique rocking chair, so, during a slight lull in the heavy traffic, I slipped out and rescued it. A few minutes later, a young couple with a load of furniture covered with a tarp came back up the road, crossed over to our side and asked if they could have their chair back.

What had happened was: They had loaded up their furniture at his mother's and tied a tarp over the load. Then his mother had given them an antique rocking chair and he had stood it on top of the load without tying it down.

They were giving it about all they had when the traffic started to jam up, so he braked, then when it thinned out, he floored the accelerator and was again making about sixty five miles per hour after they had lurched forward, but that lurch had caused the chair to slide off the back of their pickup truck and continue down the freeway in their wake.

**1976-77**

## Sad as Death is, Sometimes a Little Humor Creeps In.

A friend of mine who retired several years ago and built a lovely home atop a small mountain overlooking Wickenburg, Arizona, was a noted photographer. Although his choice of subjects were many, Indians and their way of life certainly was one of them.

He has built into his home a small theatre where, once a month he gives shows (either slides or movies) for which you are more 'allowed' to donate a dollar than asked to. The shows are about one and a half hours in duration and are mostly of the surrounding area including desert and mountain plants and animals, and, people in their natural surroundings. One of his shows was of a group tour trip into the Grand Canyon, hosted by the band of Havasupai Indians who live in the bottom of the canyon beside the Colorado River.

The group was taken to the canyon's rim by motor vehicles and met there by the Havasupai Indian guides. Each traveller was supplied with a saddle horse that really knew his stuff. The cavalcade, with a leader, a bringer upper of the rear, chap, and a

rider or two spotted along the column, then started the three or four hour ride down the long twisting trail into the canyon. You are instructed to not interfere with your horse, but just hang on, as he knows a lot more about this business than you do. It's fascinating to watch those horses pick their way along the trail (if it can be called that), stepping over the boulders putting the same foot right or left in the exact spot where the horse in front of it had stepped. The reason is: in places, if an exact order of stepping is not followed, the horse can get into big trouble.

The first night, you camp at the foot of the trail, next morning, on to the main camp or village where you are entertained royally with sumptuous food and a way of life quite different to our normal way of living. . .

All too soon it is time to start back up out of the canyon, leaving the serenity, tranquillity and the feeling of security that the mile high cliffs provide.

It's a long hard climb back out of the canyon. Then good-bye to your hosts and you're on your way, taking with you never-to-be forgotten memories.

During the show the photographer told us the following: He had gotten to know an Indian of quite some status and they had become very close friends. The Indian being very short and a really good guy, was usually referred to as 'Shortcake', and that finally became his permanent nick name —. Something went wrong, and before we were really aware of what had happened, he had crossed through the valley and over the hill to his Happy Hunting Ground. Immediately after his death, I went to see his widow and offered to help in any way I could. She said "everything is pretty well taken care of," and thanked me for offering to help. I said, "if everything else is attended to maybe I could bury my friend." Her reply, "Squaw bury Shortcake."

**Wickenburg, Arizona**
**Winter 1976-77**

## Wickenburg Gold Rush Days And The Gold Shirt Gang

"The Gold Shirt Gang" is gathering in the hills east of town. They must have gotten wind of the large shipment of gold from the nearby mine due on the stage anyday now. Word has come that it is on its way to Wichenburg. All the townspeople have gathered to meet the stage, hoping that its precious load can be transferred to

the Santa Fe train which is due in town today, and taken to comparative safety of the bank in the distant city.

The sound of galloping hooves! A cry — "Here it comes!" And around the corner careens the swaying stage; the horses stretched out as if in a run for life. The shotgun guard let loose a blast that rocked the town and hollers, "The Gold Shirt Gang is after the gold; somebody take this strongbox to the station agent for safer keeping." The sheriff and mayor heard him and came to defend the gold with their lives if necessary. The motley crowd gathers: There are dance hall girls, old women in long dresses and sunbonnets, boys in knickerbockers and girls in pinafores; men of all ages, including one, who, hearing the commotion came running from the barber shop with shotgun in hand; shaving cream, sheet and all. A barricade is hastily constructed of the dray wagon and bales of hay. Anyone able to shoot is handed a gun — men, women and children. Soon the law and its backers are ready to shoot it out with the Gold Shirt Gang. Far up the street came the cry, "Here they come!" And with the rumble of hoof beats and the roar of guns, midst a cloud of dust, down the street charged the desperadoes.

The sheriff, flanked by one of the saloon bar maids, the doctor and another citizen, backed by the people of the town opened fire. The roar of guns rose to a crescendo — then the gang retreated, hastened by the odd bullet as they rode back up the street to safety, but soon came back on foot, fanned out across the street with guns ablazin'. The sheriff, the doctor, the bar maid and the unidentified man advanced down the middle of the street ready to take on the gang at any cost. The desperados shot the sheriff, and he fell dead at my feet. The others fell in a grotesque heap in the middle of the street. The gang hauled out the mayor and hung him on a post that happened to be nearby. Then headed for the strong box. When the agent saw them coming, he beat it for safer territory. They grabbed the strongbox, dragged it back into the middle of the street impeded by the smoke and dead bodies scattered around the scene of battle; blew the lock off with a blast from a gun; scattered the chocolate centred gold coins amongst the horrified bystanders, then galloped away in a cloud of dust back into the hills from whence they came.

Those in sympathy with the gang, rounded up, hog-tied, and threw into jail all those who were in opposition to it, and so the town was left lawless for the rest of the week.

That kicked off the "Wichenburg Gold Rush Days." Before

the weekend bash was over, somebody even swiped the mayor's corpse. And that three days celebration was, the most rootin' tootin' three days of celebrating I have ever seen.

**Wichenburg, Arizona**
**Feb. 16, 1977**

## The Way It Is

The following is a letter I wrote in 1977 to the Freimarks at Walsh, Alberta (the People who bought our ranch).

Dear Isobel, Harvey and family,

Isobel, you tell Harvey your name comes first because you are the one who did the writing of your last letter to us . . .

Today, the thermometer down here in Arizona is pushing 80°F. The weather is almost always warm and quiet and the sky cloudless. There has been some nice warm rains but all in all seems to be terribly dry around here to my way of thinking. From what you said in your letter and from what we hear from other sources, it's pretty dry up there too. Here, the rainy season is in July and August so things could change by then.

Speaking of water: I suppose you know that the well on the old ranch east of the dam on s.w. 19-12-1-4 near Edwin Roll's fence, is or was an exceptionally good well. We used to pump more than 600 gallons an hour out of it for hours at a time — maybe it would have done better than that but that's all the pump could handle.

In your letter you say you're glad we have found a place to relax — I guess there is no hope for Ida and I; we just hop out of one rat race into another but at least it's different.

We have done a lot of wandering in the desert, but now that the rattlers and other snakes are out, we'll be staying closer to home.

We miss the peace and quiet of the old ranch — if it wasn't for the sometimes difficulty of getting to town in case of an emergency, we wouldn't swap a day out there for a month anywhere else.

I can't remember what I wrote in my last letter to you, so, I might repeat myself, but it is so long ago since I wrote it, it will by now be news 'again'.

There is a moment's quiet — the freeway is empty — here they come again. We are right beside the Phoenix California multilane hi-way and traffic can and sometimes does get as thick as ants on an ant hill on a warm spring day. The number of accidents for the amount of traffic is very low, but there still are many

accidents. Often the high-way patrol, the ambulance and then the sheriff will go screaming through the night on their way to an accident. Truck drivers when coming upon an accident are a great help by notifying the highway patrol etc. by the use of their C.B.'s and help is then on the way in a few minutes.

If it wasn't for the 55 mile an hour limit, it would be a lot worse, but there are still times when the traffic gets moving along pretty fast, and if there is an accident, there can be a terrible pile-up.

Of course we do have other excitement: (it's back aways but I'll write it anyhow.) On January 13th, Ida and I drove through Yarnell on our way to Prescott. The town of Yarnell seemed so sultry and quiet that you would think nothing could happen there — but just wait — farther on up in the mountains we ran into snow and couldn't resist tossing a snowball or two at each other. Then the city of Prescott; coffee; some window shopping, and then on the long way home we stopped at Mayer at our favorite restaurant for supper. Later that night at Wichenburg I drove up-town to post some letters and I noticed an armed guard on duty at the bank — there may have been others inside. That precaution was misplaced because, the next morning, the girl who ran the "Poodle Peeling Parlour" — as I called it — (her comment, "O.K. just as long as you don't call it a "Clip Joint") next door came running over excited as all get-out and told us that a bank robbery was in progress just up on the hill at Yarnell. It seems the local bartender at Yarnell (whom she knew) and his girl friend were trying to rob the bank. The bank manageress, who was a friend of mine was one of the three hostages taken. The affair lasted ten hours, involving cops, highway patrol and sheriffs. Airplanes, helicopter patrol and other law enforcement vehicles and finally the F.B.I. There was a lot of back and forth negotiating but luckily it ended up with the hostages being released unharmed but scared stiff, and the thirty-one year old robber first shooting his twenty-two year old girl friend and then himself. (Maybe he should have done that the other way around.) And as night closed in it was all over, they were both dead and nothing else left to do but clean up the mess.

Sounds like a good place to end a letter, but, there's more — one night Ida and I saw a campfire off in the distance, so I said to Ida, "I haven't sat beside a campfire for ages, let's go take a look." We stopped a short distance from the group; there were three people sitting around the campfire. (A man, his wife and their eleven year old daughter.) The man got up and walked towards us

with his hand in his jacket pocket. I'm sure it held a shootin' iron, so I got out of our car with my hands in plain sight and said, "we won't harm you." Then he invited us to join them at their campfire which we did. When the night had drifted into total darkness, in our conversation while having coffee I said, "it must be fairly safe 'way out here in the desert amongst the cacti." His reply — "I wouldn't say that. Last year, just over there a few rods beyond that dry wash they found a young girl cut up into pieces and strewn amongst the cacti; supposedly the work of a motorcycle gang." I said, "we'll scare the daylights out of your young daughter with this kind of conversation." "Naw," he replied, "she's used to that kind of thing; it's just part of life out here." I also heard that not far from where we live, a couple living in the desert in a camper were attacked, killed, and mutilated, all for the sum of seven dollars.

**The Arizona-Nevada Border**
**1977**

## Pals we don't forget

When the Boulder Dam was to be built, the work camp was set up and the machinery moved in; then construction started. Conditions were such that it was necessary for the men to pack and take their noon lunch to the working area. Not long after construction began, an apparently homeless dog wandered onto the site while the men were having their noon repast and as it is with men, one gave him a piece of sandwich, another a crust of bread or a piece of meat and so on. Then the men gave him a name, but since I don't remember what it was, I'll call him Rover.

When the workday was done, Rover went to the camp with the men, returning the next day to lounge around the work area and to mooch another meal. After a while, the men realized that he had become their self appointed mascot, and since that was the case, they might as well go all out. So each morning, the men also packed a lunch for Rover in his very own lunch bucket (compliments of the crew) and off they all went to work, each carrying his own lunch bucket including Rover.

Rover spent the days with the gang and although he didn't do any physical labour, he was still on the job, and the lift he gave the gang more than paid for his food and lodgings.

And so the weeks went by and a lick on the back of a hand or a nudge at an elbow endeared the "old mutt" to every one of the boys. But it finally happened: through no one's fault or carelessness he was accidently ran over by a truck and was killed — the

›oys buried his lunch bucket with him beside Lake Mead, and there is a marker to his memory that gives some idea of the men's appreciation and regards for their old friend.

(The name Boulder Dam was later changed to Hoover Dam.)

A Desert Song in the Arizona night.

**Arizona 1977**

The desert is a strange and lonely land . . .
Out there a coyote is howling in the night —
it is a lonely sound —
the desert is cold and foreboding
and the yapping bark and eerie wail
are relevant to my own loneliness
as the soft desert breeze sighs softly
through the night
on its solitary journey
across the endless desert . . .

There was no answer to the coyote's lonely call
— it is silent now . . .

The last moonbeams have gone to rest
amongst the cacti and the rocks,
leaving the desert a dark deserted land . . .

The light from the campfire
is now playing with the shadows
as they dance together
on the desert sand amongst the silent cacti.
But for me, this is a time for remembering —
and a time to dream.

— Thos. N. Wood

**Summer 1977**

## The Drought Came

This summer, out here on the ranch isn't what it used to be:

In the many happy years we lived on this old ranch and in the years of our retirement as we spent quiet hours amongst our wild friends when the two lakes created by the two huge dams were always almost overflowing, and grass was nearly knee high to the cattle, and the reeds and water grass in the lakes hid the cattle as they waded in the water searching for choicer tidbits. Now, after a kind of drought that we knew only in the "dirty 30's" all that has gone.

The land has become deserted of nearly all life except for domestic cattle whose meager ration of bits of parched grass is supplemented by hay or grain (chop) or feed pellets or all of these, and the only water is from wells. The ranch is lucky, as a couple of medium shallow wells and an exceptional dugout supply ample water for the cattle. On many ranches, water must be pumped from deep within the innards of the earth from 300 to 400 feet down or more. Only the silent trees, parched and brittle with their roots far down into the meager reserve of moisture that still lingers there, show signs of life. The wild animals have gone; the birds; the everything. They have wandered away to a sheltered water hole, or spring which is born deep within the earth and still flowing.

As I sit here on the patio drinking a cup of tea, a lone fly approached me and was apparently on the verge of attacking me for just a drop of the precious liquid.

Now, the cattle are gone — the grass finally gave out and they were sold (luckily at a fair price) because, where else was there to go?

Again I'm sitting on the patio of our old ranch home — there isn't the slightest breeze; everything is completely still — it is silent, and the parched and shrivelled landscape stretches away into the hazy distance. To someone else it would be lonely, but to me (who with my family spent many happy years on this old

ranch) it is not that way, because I so vividly remember the golden years when all of nature's foliage was lush, and the cattle sleek and fat — those times will come again.

The deer and the antelope and the other wild creatures will come down to the overflowing dams to drink. The coyotes now gone, will be back on the silent hills, silent except for the coyotes howling at the moon, or howling for any other excuse that suits their fancy.

**1973 through 1976 and 1978**

## Our Unforgettable Little Friend — Toni Maier

The Hills and Toni —

The hills are the guardians of God's solitude — and Toni, the sanctum of God's love . . .

When a little girl of about eight years old, her little pal deserted her for a newcomer to town. Then Toni, a lonely little girl came to me for company, an old man pushing seventy. In the three years that I have known her, our relationship has grown into the most beautiful friendship between a young pre-teen girl and an old man that it has ever been my privilege to enjoy.

While I was at the museum she came often to help. Her help was good and appreciated; her touch was gentle, and never at any time were the artifacts in danger of being broken.

Then one evening she asked if she could go home with me and see our house. I took her to our home and there she met Ida, my wife. At once a friendship blossomed that I'm certain will never end until Ida slips over the Great Divide into Eternity; and thereafter, a beautiful memory of a close and lasting friendship will remain for Toni, forever.

At other times when things were quiet at the museum, I would ask her to slip up town for two bottles of pop, and as we enjoyed our cold drinks together on a hot summer day, we chatted easily, unaware of the sixty years difference in our ages. One day when her and I were out for a drive, she said, "It's strange how we are sixty years apart in age and still have so much fun together."

During the three years since we've known her, the three of us often went out into the hills; we enjoyed the silence, the companionship, the adventure of finding new things; the finding of Indian graves, teepee rings and smoke signal fire-pits and other silent voices of the past, as well as birds and wild animals. Then as night closed in on us we reluctantly turned our footsteps towards home.

Because of things that have happened in my life I cannot be

part of the social whirl of our local community. I don't drink, so wine and cheese parties, social drinking and the inevitable derogatory conversations about our fellow men are out of bounds for me. So at times, I would have been lonely but for Toni's cheerful hello, happy smile and her sometimes smart, sometimes intelligent remarks.

On beautiful days in summer and autumn, Toni and I would go for long drives through the countryside, happy and content just enjoying each other's company and knowing that we were sharing each other's pleasures because of caring.

As time went by, we learned to trust her more and more, and when we had visitors at the house, they could hardly believe that I would give Toni the keys to the museum so she could either spend a quiet time alone in the museum or take in the more trusted of her little friends. One day, we, along with some friends of ours, and Toni and some of her pals, were in the museum. When we were ready to leave, I asked her to lock up when they left. Our friends asked, "How can you trust a girl so young with all those priceless artifacts?" I said, "I often do. You just don't know Toni."

Last August (1975), our daughter Carol was stricken with cancer, and the anxieties of the inevitable, at times were more than we could cope with. When that happened, we phoned and asked if Toni could come over for a few hours. In a few minutes she would be here, cheerful, yet quietly reserved. She somehow would interlace her life with ours, and for the great comfort she gave us we will be forever grateful.

Toni and her pal Corrie wanted to and did go to Carol's funeral. "Toni knew Carol well." She especially was a great help and comfort all through those trying months — she still is. How a young girl of eleven years can understand and somehow let you know how much she cares, is more than I can comprehend. (Her mother too in many ways was and still is a great comfort).

About a week after the funeral, Ida and I were quite despondent, when, after school, in walks Toni with her lunch bucket under her arm and cheerfully announces, "Let's pack a lunch and go out into the hills." That was just what Ida and I needed. How she can so unobtrusively change the shadow of grief into a ray of sunshine is something I will never understand.

The anxieties over the months and the passing of our daughter took their toll; and the time came when Ida had no other choice but to have quiet and rest, but the house being in a turmoil most of every day through the coming and going of children (the children

in town use our home as a drop in centre) something had to be done, but still, so as not to hurt anyone. So I suggested that we lock the door and Ida spend a quiet day at home alone. (Had I been home, the children would still have wanted to come to play.) So before leaving, I locked the door and put a note on it which read — Gone to Elkwater — Tom and . . . I too would have been alone somewhere out in the hills or the forest, but Toni and I had long planned on spending (with her parents' consent) a quiet day together. So this was the day: Her mother dropped her off in the morning at our home, and after a few preparations we were ready to leave. So Toni and I **were** to have our day together. It turned out to be a perfect day. It's strange how she will act the kid when we are with others, but as soon as we are alone, which is often, no more foolishness. She then acts as though she was a young lady of nineteen, and a perfect lady at that.

We headed south, and after driving through the rolling prairie, we climbed up into the forested Cypress Hills; spread out our robe under the silent pines and enjoyed the delicious lunch that Ida had prepared for us. Afterwards, Toni read the comics and I read the newspaper. Pretty soon she got embroiled with a crossword puzzle. Somehow she was having trouble with the word "onion". She asked me for help, so looking over her shoulder at her problem, I found I didn't have any better luck with it than she was having. So I said, "to heck with it" and then lay down again. I must have fallen asleep, because I was dreaming when Toni said, "I give up, let's go swimming."

As we walked back to the car, the breeze was sighing gently through the pines, and out in the clearing, the myriad of beautiful alpine flowers were waving to and fro in that gentle breeze. We spoke little as we drove slowly through the thousands of acres of unforgettable beauty as the alpine flowers and parkland slipped silently past. Then out to the viewpoint overlooking the prairie to the north-west. Through the binoculars we could see the ranches nestled at the foot of the Cypress Hills and then spread out over the rolling terrain to the north-west — Medicine Hat, Redcliff, and far out over the prairie until the distant haze obscured the horizon. Descending into the valley, the forest closed in around us and we seemed to be alone in nature's wonderland. Then the view opened up as we entered the beautiful valley where Elkwater Lake lies nestled between the wooded Cypress and the prairie hills. We spread our robe out on the beach, and after Toni had changed into her bathing suit, we lay there watching the bathers; the boats

skimming over the lake; the gulls as they passed to and fro overhead, and the wispy clouds far above, appearing, changing patterns and disappearing, then doing the same things all over again until Toni mustered up enough courage to join the other swimmers in the chilly water. Lying there on the beach I watched her mingle with the other bathers in an easy friendly way, admiring her ability to be part of whatever circumstances that exist. This brought us to three o'clock — coffee time — but were delayed by a near drowning. The life guards soon had him conscious again and breathing normally but, he went into shock and the park officials rushed him to the hospital in Medicine Hat. (The lifeguard later told me that the boy was alright.) We drove to the coffee shop. Toni had a pop and I had coffee and we shared a package of chips. We lingered over our meager repast, watching the Sunday crowds mingle and churn in an ever moving mass of humanity.

Then we did what everyone does who is anybody who goes to Elkwater — we climbed Old Baldy, a mountainous hill to the west of the resort. After catching our breath while taking in the panorama of the valley below and a couple of snapshots, we descended down the steep north side and then walked back to the car. We sat in the car for awhile watching the goings on around us. This brought us to supper time. Now, as always, her decorum was impeccable and as we enjoyed our repast we chatted quietly across the table. I doubt that I have ever been more proud of any girl while being my guest at lunch or dinner. Then Toni said, "I'd like to go in for another swim, but don't want to go into the water too soon after eating and get me a tummy cramp." So we drove quietly around Elkwater for about twenty minutes, then back to the beach. She changed, and then headed for the water. At 7 o'clock she joined me again, and as we sat watching, the lifeguard went off duty and the bathers dwindled to a mere handful. While Toni was changing, I struck up a conversation with an American who was on his first trip to Canada. This resulted in her having to wait for me.

Then we headed for home the long way around: climbing again to the summit, then turning east, we drove slowly through the parkland and stretches of heavy forest. We saw a few wild animals and stopped occasionally to watch them and to enjoy the quiet of the evening as the shadows lengthened, reminding us that the day was almost over — the lookout, Reesor Lake and the lookout overlooking the Graburn campground from the north, where a picnic was in progress. Toni, through the binoculars, thought she saw their truck parked near the campground but

couldn't locate her parents (we thought they might be there). Then on to the monument in memory of Constable Graburn. Here we sat and chatted for a few minutes about the events of the day. I thanked her for joining me and she in return thanked me for asking her to go, and for taking her.

The sun was low in the west; the miles stretched out before us and with a contentment and caring which comes from a mutual understanding, we headed down the road that led to home . . .

The days of early July drifted lazily by, happy, but uneventful as we joined with others in doing the things that just have to be done to justify our acceptance of our wonderful Canadian summers . . .

Then one evening, Toni came over to help finish a job she had helped me with as a slave (I bought her at a slave auction) and when we were finished, she asked me to take her out into the hills — I did — and while the evening shadows deepened, hand in hand we wandered through the silent hills and valleys as evening slipped away into the night — we were reluctant to leave this solitude, but the day was done, and so, through the soft and friendly night we drifted down the tangle of many trails, until they led back home . . .

Irvine, Alberta
1973-74-75-76

Dear Toni,

In appreciation for all the physical and emotional help you gave us at the times it was needed most; for being part of our lives; for just being Toni. And we will be forever grateful for the innumerable little things that you caused to happen, and for the beautiful memories that will linger on.

Thank you Toni.

Note: We have many young friends that more or less fit into Toni's category, but I can't write about them all.

And I might add here that Toni was 13 years old on the 13 day of September and on the 15 day of September 1978 she won the JUNIOR CITIZEN OF THE YEAR AWARD FOR 1978.

Congratulations Toni.

**1978**

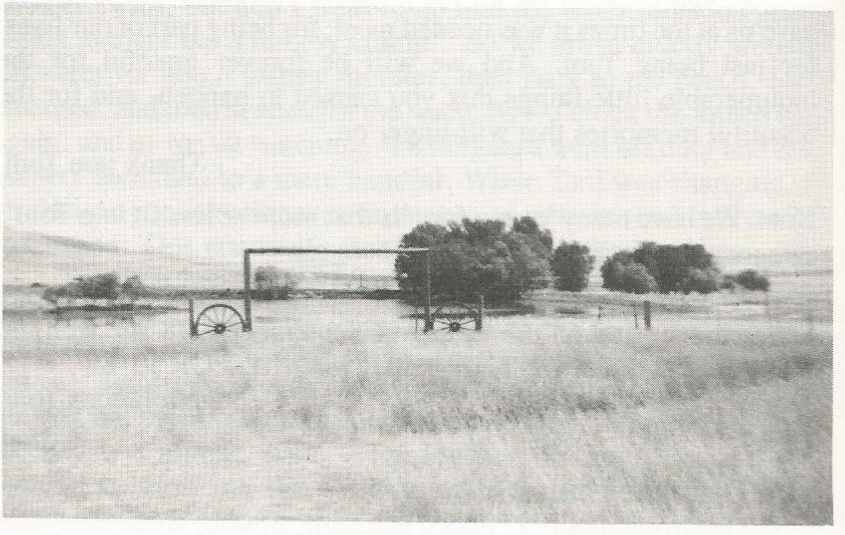
## The Drought Ended

The drought of 1977 ended last winter, but by then, everyone was complaining about the lack of moisture. So last fall we said,

"we will stay home this year instead of going to Arizona for the winter. That will fix it —" and it did. We have had more snow in southeastern Alberta this past winter than we have had for many years. Last fall I jokingly said to our farmer and rancher friends, "if we, by staying home this winter get you enough snow to fill your dams and dugouts with water during the spring runoff, you are to pay us ten dollars per dam or dugout; to me, that seems a fair price for all that water." They all agreed that it was. One rancher ordered twenty-six inches of snow. He said, "that's how much snow I will need to fill my dams and dugouts with water." Now the dams and dugouts are all filled to their brims, but the ten dollar bills are quite conspicuous by their absence. Oh well, it was a good try.

It's spring again, so we are out on the old ranch. It's "good" to come out here and somehow let our hair down, as it were. The lakes created by the big dams are full and almost overflowing; the deer and the antelope come down to drink once again. The deer seem to prefer the twilight hours and the cover of night, but the antelope come any time. The birds, hundreds of them are back. Also all our other little friends that we cherish, especially Thumper, a cute little grey bunny that just wiggled his way into our lives. He has some pals, but they are a little leary of us yet.

Later: I'm sitting out on the patio; the silent fingers of the night have pulled down the window shade of the day; there is



From the old ranch house patio: looking out on a world of tranquility.

scarcely a breeze, just enough to cause the splash of moonlight reflected across the lake to shimmer in its golden cloak . . .

While the gentle breeze is tiptoeing through the prairie grass, the moon is turning this magic night into a mystery — the night birds are calling to each other across the lake — back in the hills the cattle are lowing as they settle down for the night . . .

Then the night is rent by a yapping bark and an eerie wail as a coyote tells the moon about his loneliness — it is answered from afar off — and for a few minutes the night is filled with a prairie song; a duet by two lonely souls as it reverberates across the miles — Then silence.

## THE TRUTH, SOME OF THE TRUTH AND, NON OF THE TRUTH, SO HELP ME ANNA.

### Some Guys Are Never Satisfied

During the time that the N.W.M.P. had stop-over camps between the main police posts, a very unusual instance took place. A chap who lived in the area of a stop-over camp, was not only endowed with the tendancy to glomb onto other peoples property, but also had a brash approach to life. The following proves that point: After he had stolen the stove at one of the camps one piece at a time till only the basic hulk was left, he had the intestinal fortitude to ask the police how much they would pay him to take that hunk of junk off their hands.

## In Years Gone By

Many of the incidents and episodes of my life were long gone and long forgotten until they came back in lonely campfire memories as the campfires filled the nights with cheery warmth and light, until the lingering embers died away, signalling it was time to roll in, and if sleep did not come easily, the stars took over from there. Each holding a prompting note to the pattern of the weave of my life.

From the pattern of my pen, you would say silence and loneliness molded my life. Perhaps partly so. Silence has been a large part of it, but I wouldn't say loneliness has — aloneness maybe — but loneliness seldom. Each moment has been filled with thoughts and memories of friends, of loves and hates (I guess everyone is allowed a few), achievements, failures, some sorrows but an awful lot of happiness. . .

**Memories of long ago**: I'm camped in a lovely spot beside a stream amongst the trees that grow along its course. Along each side, a range of shallow coulees lead up to the vast prairies above which, mildly undulates off into the distance for hundreds of miles in almost every direction. It is calm down here, but the lonely breeze out on the prairie is sighing softly through the night as it rustles quietly by on its lonely journey across this great expanse.

This little valley is filled with a gloomy haze that creates weird shadows which flit from tree to tree like ghosts practising for hallowe'en. Looking up I can see a lone coyote skulking along the skyline; he stops, and is silhouetted against the hazy sky. The moon, peeking through the breaks in the scudding clouds that forewarn of the approaching storm, tries hopelessly to add a little cheer to this lonely night. The clouds break — the coyote stands out in bold relief. He throws back his head, and for a few moments the night is rent with a blood chilling howl which reverberates out across the empty miles drowning out for a few moments the distant rumble of the approaching storm. The clouds fill in again creating a weird greenish light that has settled over my camp.

I just spotted a bobcat in a tree a little way up the ravine. He may have spotted me, I don't know, but I can see his eyes shining green in the half-light. I hope he finds a deadfall to shelter under before the storm breaks instead of joining me in my tent. Oh well, I'll take in with me a handy-sized stone and if perchance we get into a disagreement over who uses my camp for the night, come morning, while I'm counting my scratches, he'll be counting his lumps.

The storm broke a moment after he stole right up to my tent and through the small flag opening at the bottom, was trying to size up prospects for a comfortable night, when wham! A bolt of lightening struck dangerously close to his bobbed tail. A sudden sense of self-preservation overtook him and he bolted through the opening in my tent flap, landing on top of me. Finding the place occupied, he scarcely tarried in his head-long flight and hit the back end of the tent with a plop, flipped end-over-end and landed on top of me again. By this time I was long gone far under the bedcovers, and he, realizing he wasn't alone, threw a real pussycat tantrum; spitting and snarling while pussycat hair and pieces of bedcovers flew all over the place. Then he got himself lined up with the small opening at the bottom of the tent flap and shot himself through it out into the storm. Poor pussy! I can still hear him snarling out there in the night, and between him and the terrible storm, it seemed that peace would never again come to this little ravine, but it did.

As early dawn was breaking, the clouds cleared away and peace and quiet returned again to my lonely little valley.

## Is There An Easier Way?

We one time had a bachelor neighbor that was noted for his many short cuts. One in particular. He didn't think it worthwhile or necessary to spend the time it took to wash dishes. So the soup, porridge, potatoes, gravy, etc. gathered on the inside of his soup plate (the only plate he ever used) until the hole in the centre didn't hold enough food to make it worthwhile starting on, then he chopped out the accumulation back to the rim and got himself a new start.

**About 1917**

## The Dairy Business Moves In

Back in about 1917, Harold Tucker and a friend, rented the land a little east of the Thiede place east of Irvine and put in a crop of wheat, oats, etc. It came up and grew nicely but it never really got anywhere because of the neighbors milk cows; those cows crawled through the fence, leaving it a tattered wreck, no matter how Harold and his friend repaired it. Yes sir! Those old bossies kept that crop chewed down to a nice chewing length.

First the boys asked the neighbors to keep their cows out. Then they **told** them to keep their "breachy" cows out and finally threatened dire consequences if they didn't, but to no avail. Every

night those rascals would be back, and every morning at daybreak the boys hazed them out of their grain field.

Finally Harold and his friend realized that those cows being milk cows, were the source of their neighbors livelihood, so they tried a new angle. Instead of chasing the cows out of the field, they chased them into their own corral and for one morning in their lives, they were dairy farmers. They milked those cows drier than a hot windy day in July and then chased them back into their own field.

Milking time for the neighbor came early, but for those bossies, it had come and gone — there were cows that morning at the neighbors, but no milk. That put an end to that business. The fence, repaired by the neighbor himself kept the cows out after that, which leads us to believe that the bossies were helped a little by their owners.

## What You Don't Know Doesn't Hurt You

The old school house dances were something to be remembered. And some of the things that happened at some of those dances were also something to be remembered.

Some people who read this may remember and, may even have had a hand in what happened, but I'm not letting the cat out of the bag, but am getting the dog out of whatever it was that he was in.

It seems that the four or five people chosen to be responsible for the serving of the midnight lunch, brought by the dance participants, were also responsible for the making of the coffee. In the kitchen standing on the floor next to the table was the wash boiler full of hot coffee awaiting serving, and the younger unattached dancers were already serving the sandwiches when a small pet dog belonging to one of the supposedly responsible four or five, maneuvered itself onto the table and promptly fell into the hot coffee — someone who thought in high gear, grabbed the dog, jerked it out of the hot brew and heaved it into the water pail. It experienced a quick climatic change in its immediate environment but apart from that suffered no ill effects.

Now what will we do for coffee? The sandwiches are being served and cake comes next and it's too late to make more, so one of them said, "I guess it's this coffee 'or else' and since the or else won't solve our problem it will have to be this coffee." So after checking to make sure there was no dog hair floating around in it, off she went. Later that night, the cooks, as we called them, were

congratulated for making the best coffee the crowd had ever enjoyed. So you see, a little exotic flavouring can go a long way.

I could have been one of that crowd, if so, being ignorant of what had happened many years ago, and it not producing a gastronomical upheaval when I was told years later by one of the "cooks," it seemed funny — I guess it was.

**1937-38**

## You Can Never Be Too Careful

During the winter of 1937-38, due to a shortage of feed and pasture, Frank Ressor along with us had cattle at Coaldale, Alberta for the winter. I lived up there and took care of them. There were a few cattle on the farm and I took care of those also.

One old cow that belonged on the farm was ready for fox meat, so her owner sold her (over the phone) to the fox farm for $5.00. One bright day, from that establishment, two men arrived with a rifle and a truck with a stake rack with the first sections at the front in place. After an hour or so of trying to persuade the cow to jump into the truck, Mr. Rowley came to their rescue and told them to back the truck up to the manure pile and then lead the cow over the pile and into the truck which they did with no problem. I know that when an animal is caused to cease living, it may do some queer things, so I suggested that they tie the old cow to the stake rack at the front of the truck flat deck. Thinking I was trying to pull one, they said, "we're not crazy; no one needs to tie up a dead cow." So they administered the en de coup — she ceased to live but muscle reaction was quite violent — the result — she kicked herself off the truck and came to rest in the middle of the yard. Mr. William Rowley who also lived on the farm just couldn't get over that one, he laughed until it was almost a disaster and every once in awhile would shake his head and say to himself, you don't have to tie up a dead cow. Finally the four of us — no, the three of us (Mr. William Rowley wasn't much help in his ecstatic state) rolled the cow to the top of the manure pile, backed the truck up to her and rolled her onto it.

Then as the early winter evening was closing in, they drove off into the sunset.

Too bad old boss had to miss out on that one.

**About 1943**

## Too Much Is Too Much

In about 1943, in our area, it was grasshoppers unlimited — they were on and in everything:

I remember that one day that year, I was mowing a field of fall rye, and by late afternoon I had whittled it down to about three acres. As I worked my way toward the centre, the great number of hoppers that rose in front of the cutter bar and flew into the uncut portion of the field, increased with every round.

Then suddenly out of the clear sky hundreds of sea gulls appeared and descended into the uncut portion of rye and started working on those hoppers.

The gulls kept getting in the way of the cutter bar, so I just pulled out of the uncut hay and called it a day. In a very short time those birds were so overloaded with hoppers that they couldn't take off, in fact, I walked amongst them as though they were chickens in a barn yard. The best they could do was stagger to their feet, hop a few inches into the air, then back to the ground and wobble out of my way.

Then they all settled down for the night. Next morning they were gone and so were the grasshoppers.

## Fred Franz's reply

I was bragging about my new binoculars to a friend of mine . . . "Ah heck", he said, "yours are nothing compared to mine. Mine are so powerful that one day I made the mistake of getting a horse that was half a mile away, into my field of vision, and they brought it up so close that it kicked me and broke my leg".

**1972**

## When It's Time To Shake It's Time To Shake

At our favorite car wash in Medicine Hat, a man left his dog in the car while it went through the car wash. When the man let the dog out immediately after it shook itself vigorously; it figured that if you go through a car wash you're wet so, did just as dogs always do — big shake — this time, no sprinkle.

## Arizona

Far out over the desert the moon is softly flooding the night with its translucent light — the stars seem so far away — the mountains dark against the horizon tear the sky into a jagged apron. And here at times man stops and trys to ponder his being — the reason for his being here — his insignificance. But all his meditations are of here and now, because out here in the lonely desert, man, and even his thoughts are lethargic, and it is so silent, that even time itself stands still.

**Spring 1974**

## Grand Canyon Arizona
## Jenny and Her Two Friends — Jake and Ben

I don't know how we got Ben, I guess he just had nowhere else to go. But he was a good dog and a true friend.

Summer nights we would all camp out on the rim — a lot could be said about those camps . . .

In the daytime on our treks through the mountains, I sometimes had trouble following Jake. But he couldn't see it that way since I had four feet to his two; he couldn't see why I wasn't able to do better than he. He forgot about his hands. But Old Jake was a good old prospector and when I was in trouble he would crawl farther up the trail, then give me a pull, and as long as he remembered he had two feet and two hands to my four feet, we got along just fine.

One day when we were prospecting, I don't know why it happened, but we were travelling along a ledge on the canyon wall. Ben was in the lead when the ledge gave way — poor Ben didn't have a chance — we could see his crumpled body on the canyon floor far below. We made our way back and started down into the canyon — it was two days before we reached him — we buried him there.

I miss him — he was a great pal. But I miss him most when we camp out on the rim. At night he would always let us know if prowlers were near, and for Jake and me he would take on all comers. You don't forget a friend like that!

Jake was old when I became his burro. But he had a big heart and a wonderful disposition; there couldn't have been anyone better to be out in the desert with.

As for Jake: there didn't need to be a rainbow for a pot of gold to be at its end — they were all over the mountains and the desert to be had. But we didn't find many; we didn't find a vast fortune, but made enough to keep us in comfort.

Finally the time came when we sought the precious metals no more . . . Jake had some friends; a young couple, where he spent his twilight years in a little cabin close by. I had a stall in the barn and the others respected it, so I was comfortable.

Sometimes when the weather was warm, Jake and I would go out and camp on the rim. Those were wonderful nights except Ben wasn't there. Some nights he seemed to be close; I thought I could hear him out there standing guard. But when morning came, there were just the two of us.

Then the time came when we went camping no more. One day the young couple helped Jake out to the barn — I know it was to see me. He stroked me gently, put his arm around my neck and said in a low whisper, "Thank you Jenny." And then they took him away. I followed them back to the house. A few days later I knew that he had gone because his young friends were sad. They took him to town and buried him in the cemetery — people go over the Great Divide and into Eternity — I wonder where animals go.

It's lonely now that Jake and Ben have gone. I sometimes go out at night to the rim and listen. I think I hear Ben out there in the lonely night, but I can't be sure. You'll hear him too, but you'll think it's the wind — it's better that way . . .

Things are looking up now; there are happier days ahead. Today, Jake's young friends daughter, Judy, who is six years old, took a shine to me. Her dad lifted her on to my back and we spent a good half hour just moseying around while he helped her to stay aboard. Soon she'll be able to ride me without help, and I assure you I won't be hard for **her** to ride. We'll go gallivanting all over the place sticking our noses into everybody's business; I've always wanted to do that, but never had the chance before.

After some happy years she will go on to bigger and better things. Her mother and dad will be older and my twilight years will have come and gone. But I'm not worried, Jake's friends will do right by me just as they did right by Jake.

Then I think I'll go and join Ben in the canyon and sometimes we'll camp again on the rim. We'll imagine that Jake is with us, and Ben will stand guard out there in the night — he'll like that, and when morning comes, there will be no trace of our camp, but we'll have been there just the same. If you see a campfire out on the rim at unusual times, it will be Ben and I — perhaps Jake too. Maybe he can come over the odd time and join us. But if you come near, there will be just a flick, and then there will be only a silent empty land and a lonely sky. As memories fade, we'll camp less and less on the "rim," and when the time comes when we are completely forgotten, Ben and I will slip quietly over the rim into the canyon, into the eons of time and oblivion.

**1980**

## There's a Way to Do Everything

One day while waiting with others in the waiting room at the denture clinic (the place where they make and fit false teeth), there was a terrible bang behind the scenes as though something heavy

had been thrown onto the workbench, followed by more or less heavy measured hammering or pounding, broken by short pauses as if the worker was checking on his progress with the project. Finally, one woman said, "What in the world can they be doing back there!" One chap came up with the answer — "they are reshaping some guy's head to make it fit his new set of false teeth."

**Late 1900's**

## The Scientific Aproach

This surfaced again in 1981.

One morning down at the cafe, a friend of mine and I, plus the staff, somehow got into a discussion about cattle dying from the over eating of grain or chop. What happens is: the dry grain as it absorbs moisture from the cow's innards, swells, interrupting the gastronomical process to the point where the animal dies. In fact, if given water, the animal will swell up and almost burst.

The above brought on the following: My friend said "he had a friend who had a pair of riding boots that weren't large enough to be really comfortable, so he decided to use the cow grain theory to solve his problem. He forthwith filled his boots with wheat, then poured in all the water they would hold. By the next morning the wheat had swollen and had literally caused the boots to explode."

Another chap with a tight boot problem tried to solve it in a different way. He filled the feet of his riding boots up to the ankles with neat's-foot oil and let them soak. His boots became very soft and stretched considerably. They also became very slippery, and he said "they were so big and slipped around so much that he was never quite sure at anytime, whether he or his horse was wearing the darned things."

**1981**

## It's That Time Again

If fall is here, can winter be far behind? It's nice out here on the ranch, even if it is a little lonely. (This time Ida didn't come.) The warm breeze is sighing through the half clothed trees, causing the golden withered leaves that have spent their span of life to come floating gently down, bounce a few times, roll and slide a few feet and then settle down to rest — they have moved for the last time and are now waiting for winter to come with its white blanket of snow to tuck them into bed for their final sleep.

## "Our" Little Home on the Prairie

Late October 1981: I was out on the ranch to close up our old home for the winter. Then, as I was leaving, memories came flooding back . . .

Many years ago, where our old home stands was just a little hill overlooking a small lake created by a huge dam. Years later, there was a basement and foundation, then a house — not a large one, but it served us well. Then there were Ida and I and our two little girls. They were so small they tripped over the weeds and fell down when they stepped in the badger holes. As the years rolled by, the weeds disappeared; the badger holes filled in and were no more. Trees sprang up and a garden materialized, and this was home; and the little house stood in the centre of it all . . .

"If there had not been 'the house', Ida and I would not have been here, nor the girls nor the trees nor the garden. There would still have been the weeds, the badger holes, the lake and the lonely prairie."

After taking care of our little family for so many years, most of the time, now stands empty and alone except for the lake and the trees and our little pets that lie sleeping in their little graves beneath those trees.

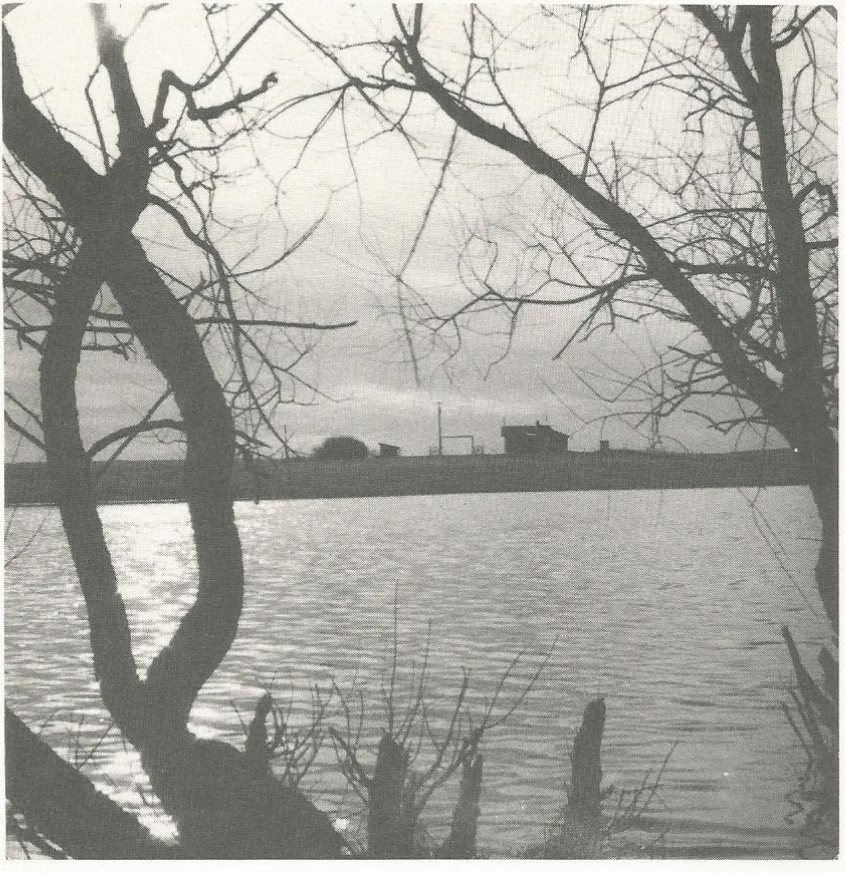
You see, the ranch has been sold, but the good people who bought it, have given us the use of our old home till the end of our time. So when the weather is warm, we often lock up our modern home in town and head for, "our little home on the prairie" . . .

There is only Ida and I now, Charmaine is away on her own, and Carol, years ago slipped over the "Great Divide . . ."

Out here, Ida and I live in our memories, maybe we shouldn't, I don't know, but it's good to relive if only in fantasy those years gone by that were so good to us.

While I was closing the gate to leave, I wondered how long it will be until we come back no more. Then I looked up, and our old home was standing there silent and alone silhouetted against the evening sky, and it seems as though I must have whispered into the thickening dusk, "little home, we'll be back next spring." Then a gust of wind rustled in the trees and sighed past me on its way down the valley. In that fitful breeze the trees gently waved their branches as if they were saying a last good-bye. Then I got into my car, and as I drove away into the gathering twilight I wondered . . . "Do those trees know something we don't?"

Later that same evening: I've been sitting in the glow of my



Memories of tranquility!

fireplace — now the coals have flickered out and their light has gone into infinity — so too have the moments of the day.

Finis

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